HINDUISM: THE WORLD-IDEAL

By HARENDRANATH MAITRA

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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TO MY FATHER

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Coming in contact with the life and civilization of the West, I have been able to view more profitably the great ideal of my own country. I have not come across any writings published here which have given to the British public the real tone of Hindu thought. In these pages I have tried to present India as she has gradually evolved, that she may be better understood by the West. Each race has a note of its own, and each, if properly cultivated, contributes to the harmony of the whole.

In studying Western civilization I have felt that there is something wanting. This something India has. In one sentence I can express the distinction. India looks within; the West without. It was the uttering of the Great Teacher who is known in the West, that the Kingdom of God is not without but within. The whole crux is there. To find out that *within* is the basis of India's civilization; and that, I boldly state, must be the basis of the World-ideal.

The West is mad for the outer. She has taken the help of science, not to give life, but death. It is the outer that the West is running after. She must turn back, she must pause and think awhile before she takes another leap. She must learn meditation.

If we want to avert all future wars, even the possibility of war, we must humbly sit on a prayer-rug sometimes instead of always running about in motor-cars. This rushing about always without the corresponding poise and balance of looking within is the cause of this war of Armageddon. When we look within we see humanity is One.

My Western friends have often expressed the wish to have Indian ideals presented in a short and simple way. Papers read at various meetings in response to this feeling, have led to this book. Needless to say, the subject could be expanded into many volumes.

In conclusion I wish to express my gratitude to Mr. G. K. Chesterton for his brilliant introduction and great interest in my country; also to Miss Mary Winchester Abbott and Mr. Edmund Russell for valuable suggestions.

INTRODUCTION

From the sand-hills of Western Flanders, through the plains of the Champagne, to the very roots of the Alps, there runs to-day a long chain of comrades. They are of races that were divided before the day-break of history; they number nations that have met each other in murderous battles and more murderous peace; they include the persecutors and the persecuted, the oppressors and the oppressed.

The two immortal rivals are side by side, the islanders of Britain and the old legions of Gaul. England has in arms upon her right that shining shame which is called Ireland. France has in arms upon her left the cities which curbed her at Courtrai and aided the cannonade of Waterloo. And the news is already in their trenches that the sons of those veterans who won their freedom at Majuba have eagerly hoisted a once-hated flag over the citadels of German West Africa.

There is no crime that has not been condoned, no glory that has not been forgotten, no great sin that has not found absolution, where it was needed for a final blow against something with which all are at war.

Again and again and in posts of great honour along that line will be found men the like of whom have never been seen amid the streams and soft

woodlands of the West and North in all the three thousand years of man's recorded history. That from which they come is so distant, so mysterious and so great that most of us can say little more about it, save that it is fitting it should be present in such an armed parliament of mankind.

Even we who call their country India, even those of us who have dealt with it, traded with it, or sought to rule it, know not whether it be an empire, or a chaos, or a nation, or a theocratic association, or a secret society, or only a map. We know that the Moslem is there, as he has been almost everywhere, great in arms and authority; but we know not whether his mark is as deep as in Barbary or as superficial as in Spain. We know that an abstract philosophy is there, and we call it Buddhism; but we hardly know whether it is a faith or only a doubt. Some of us perhaps dimly realize that Buddhism and Hinduism are not one and the same.

We have no united vision of India, such as that which makes us see that France is a democracy or that Russia is mainly a religion. Our great and yet limited exploit reverses the hackneyed phrase of Cæsar. We have come, and we have conquered; but we have not seen.

Many years ago an assembly met in London calling itself a Parliament of Religions. The army in Northern France is itself a Parliament of Religions, and a Parliament of irreligions as well. The compact and pointed atheism of the great French sceptics fights side by side with the very militant mysticism of the French priests. The Puritanism of the English middle-class is allied

with the paganism of the class above them and the paganism of the class below.

Nor is it any diplomatic accident that unites them all. They are fighting to free the arena of controversy. They are fighting for a free Parliament. For over against them, in naked ambition and enormous strength, stands that which is the enemy of all civilized faith and doubt : a narrow universalism. Prussia has summed up the peril of her own policy in coining the phrase World-Politics. It is indeed true that she would make the whole world merely political.

But there are some human societies that will never be made merely political, and one of them is India, the India of acted poetry and immemorial traditions, the India in whom life and religion are one, of which Mr. Maitra writes in this book.

Like Ireland, like Russia, India is at root religious rather than political. The mysticism of Ireland and of Russia have a practical interest, because obligations which savour of the supernatural have there become almost natural. The two peasantries may be said to stand for the twin mystical virtues of chastity and charity. With us the Russian has been neglected because it was distant, and the Irish almost more neglected because it was near. But the immediate future will certainly require a new psychological sympathy with both these national temperaments, which will flourish much more freely after the removal of the mere materialism of the Prussian menace. In both these cases any comprehension can only be sought through the popular religion, and this is clearly true also of India.

Those who fancied they disposed of the unity of Ireland by catalogue of rival kings would do well to remember that saints live longer than kings; and that St. Patrick is more living and, in the only rational sense, more modern than Parnell. In the same way all that is most social or sociable in Russia is apparently to be found along with all that is most mystical.

The mysticism of India has in this respect the same political moral. The unity of India is spiritual unity. Krishna and Buddha are greater unifying powers than Napoleon or Frederick (so-called) the Great.

Doubtless India's type of spiritual intensity is different from Ireland's, different from Russia's, different indeed from that familiar to me and most men of my blood—different, yet at least equally spiritual. Russia touches the Orient; she is a great link. Her people still go on pilgrimages; they still believe in poverty and holiness, miracles, sacrifice and faith.

There is one respect in which I find myself much more in sympathy with Mr. Maitra than with the fashionable exponents of Orientalism. I do not myself admit that the more impersonal sense of deity is the higher or that mere unity is the absolute good. Those of the English and Americans who urge Eastern ideals upon us seem to urge them in this sense; and it is a position which I should dispute.

But Mr. Maitra's book certainly gives a different and novel point of view; and, right or wrong, I very warmly welcome this able statement of the Indian

standpoint, especially when it is made by an Indian who knows his own country as an Englishman or an American cannot. His enthusiasm is for the human side of Hinduism, which touches the heart and makes the lofty ideals of the Vedas a practical religion and poetry for the common people.

Mr. Maitra has one mark of the candid enthusiast: he is not afraid of being what is called paradoxical; that is, he is ready and eager to defend what would be called the least defensible parts of his case. He has his own explanations, clear and readable ones, of such things as the caste system and the status of women in the East; which are at least refreshing in their divergence from the hackneyed views of the West.

It is very desirable that such positions should be set forth and tested; that clear conversion or rejection should be substituted for that muddle which we call the modern intellect, and which is not so much a liberty of speech as rather an anarchy of silence. The religion of so many millions must be either altered or absorbed; it cannot be slighted, and it ought not to be parodied.

G. K. Chesterton

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CHAPTER I

THE STREAM OF INDIAN THOUGHT

THE time has come to present India to the West: India the contemned of the world but the Beloved of the Gods. The misunderstanding of India has been so colossal that it would be absurdly comic, if it were not so tragic. It may be that the attitude of the Hindus, reserved and proud to strangers, though frank and simple to their friends, has had something to do with the greatness of this misunderstanding. To the ignorant criticisms heaped upon them, they have taken somewhat the disdainful tone of the great Athenian philosopher who, when banished from Athens, calmly said, "It is not I who have lost the Athenians, but the Athenians who have lost me."

The age-long culture of India is not dependent upon the verdict of nations not in existence when she had formulated her philosophy, literature and life, on ideals living to-day for three hundred millions of people. It is because India now sees the nations of the West struggling in the grip of their own matter-mad-civilization that she realizes what she has to give to the world, and knows that in order to give it she must be understood as she has not been in the past. Because

of her vision of the Oneness of all Humanity, she wishes to be understood by her brother races. She does not wish to hide her light under a bushel, but to set it upon a tower that it may give light to the world.

To understand India, one must realize in the first place that the key is religion, for the East is the Mother of Religions, and India is the heart of the East. From her altar-fires, sacredly kept and never allowed to die out through all the centuries, the flame of spirituality has been kindled in every other land. Hinduism is the one religion which has never persecuted other faiths. India is the one land whose mission to other lands has been, ever and only, Peace, Wisdom, Love. As the Parsees, fleeing from their land to India, brought their ever-burning sacred fire enclosed in a crystal globe, and before all else built a shrine for this symbol of their religion, so has India ever cherished in her heart as her most sacred possession, the consciousness that the essence of religion is to *see God.* And as the Nile, having its source in the Lake of the Gods, in its outward-flowing fertilizes all Egypt's land, making Egypt indeed what it is, so the religious ideal of the Land of Bharat pours itself into the very life of the nation, permeating every atom of her existence, making life and religion one, as they are in no other nation on the face of the globe. The unity of India is the unity of a Oneness-of-Spiritual-Vision. From Kedarnath in the north to Rameshwar in the south, from Dwarka in the west to Puri in the east, pilgrims of all classes and all faiths meet from every part of India, and at

these shrines, no caste, no sect exists. All are one before God.

India is a land of dreamers, and her great dream is of God. The West calls the East dreamers, and the East is proud of it. "All that we value most has come from the East," says Max Muller, and it is deeply true, for the things of most value are the great dreams of life. All the great poets and philosophers, great artists and scientists, great discoverers and nation-builders have been great dreamers. They are the true Karmis or workers of the world. There was once a dreamer by the name of Joseph, whose brothers said, "Here comes the dreamer; let us sell him into Egypt." They sold him into Egypt. When famine came to the land and the brothers went down into Egypt to buy corn, there they found Joseph *and he had the corn.* India has the spiritual corn. Her granaries have ever been full, and she has given without stint to all the nations in the past. It may be that now the time has come to give as never before to the spiritually-famine-struck West. For the real cause of this war of Armageddon is a famine of spirituality.

Material and intellectual progress has been the goal of Western civilization often at the expense of the ethical and spiritual. The West is not and never has been Christian. The key-note of Christianity is humility. The keynote of Western civilization is egotism. The intellect has been used for the aggrandizement of material power rather than for the furtherance of spiritual life. So even in its own realm it has not reached the heights it did in

the nations of old. In philosophy and poetry we still look to the glories of the past. The researches of scholars and archæologists constantly reveal the existence of lost arts and sciences, chemical secrets and architectural construction, which transcend anything of modern times. That which impresses one most in all these wonders of the past, compared with modern achievements, is the sense they give of something *beyond this life.* Modern wonders were built for man. Ancient wonders were built for God. That is the difference between the East and the West. "Asia is one," says Okakura Kakuzo, the poet-philosopher of Japan. "Love for the Ultimate and the Universal is the common thought-inheritance of every Asiatic race, enabling them to produce all the great religions of the world," distinguishing them from the peoples of Europe "who love to dwell on the Particular, and to search out the means, not the end of life." On the other hand, G. Lowes Dickinson, in his travels in the East, finds the antithesis to be, not between the East and the West, but between "India and the rest of the world." The harmony of these two ideas lies in the fact that India is the heart of the East, the fountain of Eastern wisdom, whose streams flow through Asia even unto the West, but whose waters are purest nearest the source.

The India of the past was larger than we think, and in the India of to-day may be found *living* interpretations of the perished religions of other lands that has puzzled the brains of scholars. India extended from the mouth of the Ganges to the source of the Nile. The Parsees in fleeing to India

were only coming back to their own people. Their sacred fire is the same as the ancient Vedic fire. The beautiful Vedic hymn to the rising Sun as a symbol of Light and Life is still used as the sacred morning prayer by the Brahmins.

It is not so well known that Egypt was linked to India in the past, that the Puranas have a full description of the country and of the source of the Nile which was variously called *Nila, Kali, Krishna,* all having the same meaning of dark blue. The Puranas say: "The celebrated and holy river takes rise from the lake Amara in the region of the Holy-Land of the Soma-Giri, or the Mountains of the Moon." When the source of the Nile was discovered, or re-discovered in 1860, the explorer had with him a map of the region drawn from Puranic description, and he records in his Journal that he found the lake which he called Victoria Nyanza, still called by the natives "Lake *Amara*—the Lake of Immortality or the Lake of the Gods," and the mountains round about still called in the native tongue, "Mountains of the Moon." It is significant that the Lotus is the sacred and royal flower of both Egypt and India, that the ancient name of the Egyptian Horus, the Deliverer, is *Hari*, meaning "He who steals our sins." A study of the religious symbolism of the two countries gives overwhelming evidence of this very ancient link between the two lands, and a study of Indian thought would afford many a valuable clue to Egyptologists.

This, however, would necessitate a change in some dates of Indian history given by Western scholars. With all due respect to such savants, we

may be allowed to suggest that the scholars of a people capable of producing the philosophy, science, laws, arts and literature of India may be better fitted to ascertain the dates of their own achievements, and to interpret their own culture, than foreign scholars who know little of the living customs, symbols and characteristics of the Indian people; and whose ignorance will, we fear, remain in its colossal grandeur so long as they are obsessed with the idea that ancient Hinduism is the only part of Indian life worth study, and that Hinduism to-day has in some unaccountable way stood still or degenerated.

Scholars have appreciated the India of the past. Max Muller has nobly said: "If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth—I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of the choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life not for this life only, but a

transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India." But even Max Muller believed chiefly in the India of the past, and would never visit the India of to-day for fear of being disenchanted. I wish to present not only the India of the past, but also the India of to-day; and I myself say boldly that India of to-day is also a great India, in fact she is spiritually greater than the India of Vedic times. I shall leave it to my readers to judge whether the Hindus have really developed a system of thought and evolution in the right sense of the term, which if practised would vitally help the world.

Neither nations nor religions can stand still and live. A degenerate religion does not have the vitality that Hinduism has to-day. This idea of the static quality of Hinduism is one of the obsessions of the West. " Children observe no motion in the stars." Hinduism is and always has been dynamic. It is the dynamic quality of Indian ideals that has made " the glory of Asia something positive." It may not seem positive to the West, because it is not aggressive; and positiveness and aggressiveness seem to be one in Western thought. It is a positiveness in harmony with that of Christ, but not with that of Western civilization. India loves Christ. She does not love Christianity, for she sees very little relation between the two. Her ideal is an ideal of the heart, as was that of Jesus. " It lies," say the Japanese artist, " in that vibration of peace that beats in every heart; that harmony that brings together emperor and peasant; that sublime intuition of oneness which commands all sympathy,

all courtesy to be its fruits, making Takakura, Emperor of Japan, remove his sleeping-robe on a winter's night because the frost lay cold on the hearts of the poor; or Taiso of Tang forego food because his people were feeling the pinch of famine. It lies in that worship of Freedom which casts around poverty the halo of greatness, and imposes his stern simplicity of apparel on the Indian Prince. It lies in the dream of renunciation that pictures the Boddhi-Satwa as refraining from Nirvana till the last atom of dust in the universe shall have passed in before to bliss. These things are the secret energy of the thought, the science, the poetry, and the art of Asia."

And these things are the glory of Hinduism. To know Hinduism is to know India. There are Mohammedans and Parsees and many other religious sects in India, but they are all more or less Hinduized. As a Western writer, Mr. Havell, has said: "It was the Aryan philosophy, which makes India one to-day, that synthesized all the foreign influences which every invader brought from outside, and moulded them to its own ideals." Hindu civilization, although very complex, has always kept one distinct note—the note of *spiritual culture*, and it is because of this age-long spiritual culture, embodied in the daily life of the people, that they have been able to keep the fire of their ideals burning, through all changes, even to the present day. Their life-and-religion is an internal growth which they have gradually developed into a harmony within themselves; and those who have attempted to tread upon their paths have not converted the

Hindus, but have to a very large extent developed their own ideals into a harmony with the Hindu ideal. The Hindus have been able to keep their own path not only for themselves, but for the rest of the world. Whatever they had they gave without stint. To give is the breath of life to the Oriental.

In the centuries before the Christian era, one might almost say as a preparation for that era, the stream of Indian thought began to flow with its greatest force throughout Asia and through Asia to the West. This was the era of the great universities of India, to which students came from all over the world; it was the era of the Buddhist missionaries sent out by the great Emperor Asoka. These were the two chief channels through which the gathered waters of Hindu philosophy and religion poured itself into other lands. Ceylon and the Islands of the South; Japan, China and the five Greek kingdoms of the West: Syria, Egypt, Macedonia, Cyrene, Epirus, received this Hindu thought, and its "doctrines and precepts were widely known in Palestine when Jesus Christ was born." Since the Christian era through the Byzantine Greek influence, through the schools of Alexandria, through the Arab conquest, it brought its art, philosophy, science and religion to Europe, which to-day have penetrated to the farthest West. What its vitality in India is may be seen in the words of the Maharajah of Cossimbar, President of the All-India Hindu Conference at Hardwar—

"No religion and its followers have had to pass through such ordeals as Hinduism and Hindus, and

yet they have survived and are a living force. The thought, the philosophy, and the truths that permeate Hinduism, stamp it with immortality, and the intellect of Europe and America are being slowly won by Hindu thought. As in the past, so in the future, Hinduism will hold the torch of wisdom and knowledge aloft to lead and guide the whole world. Hinduism places truth beyond and above all things, it teaches reverence for high and low, so that we may walk through life with reverence and love. None have the monopoly of wisdom and faith; the sun shines for all, the wind sighs for all, and God is for all. I am reminded of that memorable sloka of the *Gita* which preaches the wonderful doctrine that 'Whosoever comes to Me, through whatever form, through that form I reach him; all men are struggling to reach Me through various paths, and all the paths are Mine.'"

This sloka contains the central idea of the *Gita* and the essence of Hinduism. All paths to God are One. All religions One. "All these are threaded upon Me as pearls upon a string."

The Hindus have really no such word as religion. The word has no synonym in Sanskrit. Our word is *Dharma*. *Dharma* includes far more than religion. It is really the inner Law of Being, and applies to everything in the universe as well as man. Thus the *dharma* of fire is heat; the *dharma* of water is coolness; the *dharma* of honey is sweetness. The *dharma* of the warrior is to fight; the *dharma* of the scholar is to know; the *dharma* of the poet is to sing. Man's *dharma*, then, is his Ideal. It is the evolution of his character. Through

this idea of *dharma*, the Hindu gradually has built up a complete system of spiritual culture. The Hindus have never separated life from religion or religion from life. The two are so intermingled that we may not know where one melts into the other. It is like the question whether the seed precedes the tree or the tree the seed.

The root of the word *Dharma*, is *dhree*, to hold; the root of the word religion is *ligare*, to bind. That which holds, holds by an inner law, what binds is an external bondage.

Therein lies the difference between the religion of culture and the religion of creed. Creed is something external; it is not internal. Culture is internal. So the dominant note of India is cultural, the dominant note of the West credal. And the West is reaping to-day the curses of creed. All departments of life, politics, religion, sociology, are held fast by credal dogma. Such a mind is more prone "to define and separate than to combine and integrate; more able to analyse than to synthesize. It is more scientific than philosophical; more positive than imaginative." The Hindu mind is just the reverse. Its religion is synthetic, philosophical and imaginative. It recognizes and emphasizes the oneness of all life. Because of its credal civilization what do we see in the West? Divisions of class ruling; individuality based on selfish ideals; patriotism grounded in selfish interests; industries pushed for one's own people, at the cost of others. Material progress in the West has undermined the bed-rock of co-operation in the human family; hence this present ruin and devastation.

I can never think for a moment that the life of Jesus was the life of a creed. The West has mutilated the teachings of Christ. We cannot understand Christ unless we take the spirit of Hinduism. A higher type of Christianity, a Christianity sprung from its very founder, could have a great following in India. Christ was a Prince of Sanyasins. If any one went there from the West with the Sanyasin ideal, it would be a momentous thing. Not that India would know anything new, but she would be encouraged to see that there was a brother race or nation in the West who was equally anxious to find the reality of things. The ideal of renunciation and sacrifice will always call sympathy from India.

"Behold the lilies of the field," said Jesus of Nazareth. Was it only a metaphor? There is a deep meaning of Life behind. Hindus conceived of this beautiful symbolism long ago. Christ was an Eastern. If he had taught in India, He would have said "the lilies of water," using the symbol of the lotus, as the religious Teachers of India have done for thousands of years. Flowers to a Hindu are sacred. Flowers he gathers to adorn the sanctuary. He throws flowers at the feet of his Lord and he throws *himself* at the feet of his Lord. Both personal and social life is as the flower's growth. The Hindu's ideal is flexible; its roots are deep in Nature and God. His is the large tolerance that recognizes all as children of the one Mother. He invites the whole universe, for the universe is his kith and kin. He dreams of universal toleration. He wants the universal federa-

tion in which each nation will live as a great symbol to realize his own dream, yet to compare notes with the others.

Thousands of years ago there went forth an invitation from the Indian sky and forest to the nations of the world. Our fathers kindled a fire of sacrifice. They have kept it burning. One fuel after another has been poured into it, but it is the same fire. That fire we, their children, however feeble, hold before the world. Darkness prevails. It is that fire which the Hindus have kept sacredly burning that alone can dispel this darkness—the sacred Fire of Spirituality.

CHAPTER II

HINDU RELIGIOUS FAITHS

THE civilization which the Hindu has built up has a type of its own, and that type has been shaped and formed by a particular ideal. The note throughout the ages that the Hindu has developed into a great harmony is spiritual culture.

More than five thousand years ago, when the Indo-Aryans crossed the Indus, they came to India with a past culture. They were not a primitive race. They had a history, they had a tradition, they had an ideal. That ideal found its outlet under the starlit sky of their new atmosphere. They breathed a new breath. They sat down for a new meditation.

It began in Wonder. They found themselves in the midst of an exuberance of Nature. Its wide expanse enveloped them, and they sang as the *chatak-bird* sings in summertime as it rises higher and higher in the sky and in its realized dream bathes the mass of mankind below. So the Indian bard sang his celestial song.

For whom did he sing? He sang for his God, the God within and without. He wanted to realize himself. He wanted to realize God. He did not want to create. He wanted to find. He wanted to find his Self, and in this finding he saw that there

was a Self behind his self, there was a Self behind all the surrounding Nature. Vast was his laboratory. The great sky above, the ever-glowing sun, the beautiful dawn, the maddening moon of nights, the starlit atmosphere, the snow-wreathed heights of the Himalayas, the ever-flowing majestic rivers by his side. What else did he want? That was enough.

He had his deep forest as his University. He built his home on the banks of the river. Nature appeared to the Hindu of the Vedic time as a great reality, because through Nature he received his revelations. He sat with folded arms deep in meditation, and received the electric current from the Great All, the great encircling Spirit. On the heights of the Himalayas he exclaimed, "What art Thou, O Thou Beautiful?" The surrounding rivers appeared to him as the flow of the great Spirit of the Universe also. He witnessed this great Spirit everywhere, to it he offered his sacrifices. He saw God in the sacrificial fire as Moses saw Him in the burning bush. He saw the lightning. He heard the thunder. He addressed God in all; the One Being who was in the sun, behind the sun, in the moon, behind the moon, in the stars, behind the stars, in the heights of the Himalayas, in the waters of the rivers; that Spirit which was the Life, that Spirit which was the Soul, that Spirit which was the All.

Thus grew his wonder, thus grew his passion, thus grew his worship. It began with wonder and in all the ages through which Hindu history has passed, the same is the wonder of the Hindu. He finds and yet he wants to find. He is ever running

towards that Ideal of God. His ideal is to rise higher and higher in the scale of evolution, an evolution that is for Eternity.

It is simply preposterous to the idea of a Hindu that he should ever have thought of a dual or a trial God. No race or nation on earth, with even a little intelligence, can ever think that there are two Gods. It is far more so then with a race which in the beginning of the world's civilization conceived a philosophy and system of thought which no other nation has ever equalled.

> "They call Him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, and He is heavenly nobly-winged Garutman. He is One, sages call Him by many names, Agni, Yama, Matarisvan."
>
> "What God shall we adore with our oblation? The great One who is the Sole Ruler of all the moving world that breathes and slumbers, and is the Lord of bipeds and quadrupeds."
>
> "What God shall we adore with our oblation? The great One whose are these snow-clad mountains as well as the terrestrial seas, and whose arms are these heavenly regions."
>
> "Even He is Agni, He is Aditya, He is Vayu, He is Chandramas, He is Sukra, He is Brahma, He is Apa, He is Prajapati."

These few slokas are enough to show that the Hindu did not worship Nature and then lead himself up to Nature's God. He realized the existence of a great Purusha (Being) behind all Nature's phenomena. And in order to realize himself in that Being whom he addressed as the very Soul of everything, he had his rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices.

Sacrifice to a Hindu had a great symbolism It was not a meaningless something which he did and does now as an external propitiation. The whole kernel of sacrifice was to bring him into direct touch with God.

Thus he began the foundation of his culture. No body of men came from outside with written pamphlets and books to say, " That is not what you ought to think or do. Come take this book which contains the only Truth." He was not influenced by such external, material things. He was experimenting on Nature within him and without. He received his revelation through Nature. He established his university in his forest home, and from his Forest-university came the stream of his ideals and culture. Let us see what was the principle which could be the foundation for such cultural ideals.

" Bring the fruit of a nyagrodha tree," said the Guru to his chela. When the disciple brought the fruit, the Guru said, " Break it and tell me what do you see ? " " The seeds, almost infinitesimal." " Break one of them, and tell me what do you see ? " " Nothing." Then the Guru said, " That subtle essence which you do not see, of that very essence this great tree exists. Even so in the Universe, that subtle essence which we do not see, even that is That by which the Universe exists."

Another example of this system of training, which the Hindus established thousands of years ago and which even to-day is the method of teaching, is the story of Bhrigu. Bhrigu came to his father, the sage Varuna, and said, " Tell me, O revered father,

how to know Brahman (God)." His father did not place before him a certain defined creed and say, "Get these things by heart and you will know Brahman." He did not even say, "Read the Vedas, and you will know Brahman." He said, "*Go and meditate, my child. Thus will you know Brahman.*" And to help him in meditation, he gave him this formula: "*That from which all that exists has come into being; that by which, after coming into being, all that is continues to be; that toward which all objects move and into which all objects enter;—know that as Brahman.*" The son went away with his formula, and started his meditation; and when he came back, he said, "I find that Food is Brahman. Is that right, O Father?" His father said only, "Go and meditate, my child, and by meditation you will know Brahman." The son went away, and this time he came back with the answer, "Life is Brahman, O Father." "Go and meditate again," said his illumined father. He went away again, and again he came back and this time he said, "Unity of Consciousness is Brahman." His father said once more, "Go and meditate, and by meditation know Brahman." He went away once more, and when he came back he was glowing with enlightenment, his face indicated a passionate exuberance, the expression of the soul, and when he saw his father, he exclaimed from a distance, "I have found Him, I have found Him. *Anandam* (Love) is Brahman." His father embraced him and said, "*Yes, my child, you are right. From Anandam have all things come into being; having come into being, by Anandam are they kept alive, towards*

Anandam do they move and into Anandam do they enter."

These were the methods which were in vogue and are in vogue in the Hindu schools and universities, ancient and modern. This is the note of spiritual culture which the Hindu has enunciated from the very first day of his civilization. He has no such thing as a definition for his religion. His religion is not made of such a substance that it can be found in a particular book or books. The Hindu from his early days of life goes through a training and discipline which gradually leads him up to his Ideal. It is the individual character that a Hindu seeks to build. He knows that if the individual is properly trained and disciplined, his race will be trained. If X is right and Y is right and Z is right, then the sum of the Xs, Ys and Zs who compose the race will be right. Thus the Hindu went to the very root. He did not care very much for the external provided the internal was on a sound basis. So if you now go into any of our *tols,* or schools of the ancient type, where the learned Pandit is explaining to his disciples the various principles of life, you will find that he gives his training according to the individuality of each disciple and the degree of their evolution. He wants to build character. This training of the individual man has been the chief characteristic of Hindu culture. Through this method the Hindu has developed his various systems and cults, in which, although there may be hundreds and thousands, nay, millions of followers, each has his particular note, yet all are subordinate to the great keynote

of the whole harmony. It is the same key-note that is sounded throughout the three main periods of the Hindu's cultural life, the Vedic, the Upanishadic, the Puranic.

There is a tendency at the present time to speak of the Vedic religion as a simple monotheism, in comparison with the so-called polytheism of modern India. But the truth is that the Vedic religion was neither more nor less monotheistic than the Puranic Hinduism of to-day.

> "I know the all-pervading Supreme Being who is exalted above all, glorious like unto the suns and aloof from darkness. By knowing Him alone is death conquered. Except this, there is no other road leading to Salvation."

> "The All-Wise, whose body is spirit, whose form is light, whose thoughts are truth, whose nature is ether, from whom all things proceed; He is my Soul within the heart, smaller than a corn of rice, smaller than a corn of barley, smaller than a mustard seed. He is my Soul within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than heaven, greater than all the worlds. He from whom all things proceed, He, my Soul within the heart, is Brahma. When I shall have departed thence, I shall obtain Him."

> "I am the Spirit seated deep in every creature's heart.

> Never the spirit was born; the spirit shall cease to be never;
> Never was time it was not; End and Beginning are dreams!
> Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth the spirit for ever,
> Death hath not touched it at all, dead though the house of it seems."

These three quotations from the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita show the oneness of the ideals of the three periods. The real difference between the Vedic and Puranic period is that the Vedic gods represented the cosmic attributes, and the Puranic gods the human attributes of the *One* " whose Being is Life, whose Shining is Light, and whose Glory is Love." In the Vedic period we have the gods of fire, of wind and water, of sky and sun, and the sacrifices are those of fire and libation.

The Homa sacrifice, the burning of *ghi* or clarified butter with the chanting of sacred hymns and mantrams, is preserved to-day in every orthodox Hindu home. It begins the day as both a physical and spiritual purification. Fire has always been the most natural symbol of the divine; the great purifier, burning all the dross of earth, and flaming upward to God like an intense prayer of the heart.

> " O Fire! Sacred Fire! Purifying Fire! Thou who sleepest in wood and mountest in shining flames on the altar, Thou art the heart of sacrifice, the fearless aspiration of prayer, the divine spark concealed in all things and the glorious Soul of the Sun!"

This is one of the ancient Vedic hymns.

Like all things that are close to nature, there is a simplicity and grandeur about the Vedic ceremonials and teachings. They belong to a period when men were occupied with action. Fearlessness was a predominant virtue.

> " As heaven and earth are not afraid and never suffer loss or harm, even so my spirit fear not thou. As day and night are not afraid, nor ever

suffer loss or harm, even so my spirit fear not thou. As sun and moon are not afraid, nor ever suffer loss or harm, even so, my spirit fear not thou."

This is the heroic basis of Aryan thought.

The daily duties prescribed were the same as those of Hinduism to-day : worship of the Supreme, reverence for gods and holy men, reverence for parents, the doing of some kind deed every day to other human beings—most often the giving of food; kindness to animals. These are really love of God and love of man, or rather of all living things. "Thou shalt love God and thy neighbour," including animals. This is characteristic of Hindu thought, for the Hindus, like St. Francis, have always considered the birds and beasts and even the flowers and the trees as their little brothers. As Mr. Havell says in his *Ideals of Indian Art*, "Only in rare moments of illumination has Christian Europe realized, with St. Francis, that all creation is one. It has been left to modern science to confirm what Indian philosophy taught 5000 years ago, and what Indian art has ever sought to express. It is to symbolize this universal fellowship of man, the unity of all creation, that the Indian artist loves to bring into his picture all forms of teeming life—to symbolize the universal law of the One in many."

Shelley conceived and expressed this oneness of all life in his *Ode to the West Wind*—

> "Make me thy lyre, ev'n as the forest is,
> What if my leaves are falling as its own?
> The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
> Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,
> Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
> My Spirit! be thou me, impetuous one!"

The Vedic period may be called the era of the *will* in religion. The period that followed was the time of the great epics and the great forest universities of India. The Vedantas, or Commentaries on the Vedas, were written, and the sublime philosophy of the Upanishads was evolved. "Human mind has never soared higher in speculations on God and the soul." Codes of law and schools of philosophy were established. Six great systems have come down to the present time, containing nearly every philosophic theory that can be found since, from the most agnostic and material thesis to the spiritual philosophy of Vedanta.

But the abstractions of intellect can never satisfy the heart of man. The divinity in man seeks the humanity in God. It requires a God with a heart as well as a soul. "I am the sky and I am the nest as well," sings Rabindranath Tagore. And in nothing, perhaps, has Hindu religion shown its divinity so much as in its teaching of the humanity of God. It is in the humanity of God that man has the promise of becoming divine. We cannot love that which is too far removed. The Upanishads say, "God is Truth, Wisdom, the Infinite, Joy, Immortality, Peace, Purity, the One, and Love." Love is the last word. "From Love have we come into being, by Love do we live, towards Love do we move, into Love do we enter." This is the path of *bhakti* or devotion. Hindu wisdom points out three chief paths to the realization of God, corresponding to the human psychology of the will, the intellect, and the heart. The Hindu sages did not simply say that man must find God, but they told him *how* to

find God, and the how was wonderfully adapted to the complex nature of man. Three chief paths are called *Karma* or the path of action, *Jnana* or the path of knowledge, and *Bhakti* or the path of devotion. Each soul takes one path or the other according to his *dharma. Dharma,* the inner law of one's being, differs according to the constitution of the individual. The *dharma* of one man cannot be the *dharma* of another. What is good for me is not necessarily good for you. *Swadharma,* or one's own *dharma,* does not mean, however, that one cannot change his particular belief, such as changing from Christianity to Mohammedanism. Religion in that sense does not exist to a Hindu. It is not his *belief,* but it is his character, his regulative principle, his Ideal. That is his *dharma.* So the *dharma* of the statesman and the warrior may be said to be the path of *karma* or action; the *dharma* of the scholar and the scientist, the path of *jnana* or knowledge; the *dharma* of the poet and the artist, the path of *bhakti* or love and devotion, beauty and sweetness. But *bhakti* is for all. Some Western missionaries have tried to prove that the *bhakti* element in modern Hinduism has been derived from Christianity, just as the ideal of Krishna has been claimed to be taken from Christ; but Krishna lived 5000 years ago, and the songs and stories of Him were part of the life of the people too far back to trace their origin. *Bhakti* is as old as the heart of man, even in its definite form in India older than Krishna, yea, older than that bugbear of the West, Hindu idolatry.

Of this the real meaning and significance is not

understood. God is One, but He is present in every place and in every thing, great and small. Such form of worship simply develops that realization. It has been the privilege of the Hindu mind to view the whole through the parts and in the parts. The Hindu is said to worship "sticks and stones," but he is really worshipping the One Being behind all sticks and stones. He may worship Nature, he may worship man, he may even worship animals; but he has never worshipped Nature as Nature, man as man, or animals as animals.

He wanted to see behind Nature the hand of the Great *Purusha* or Being; behind the man he wanted to see the hand of the same Purusha; behind every possible and impossible thing his attempt was to witness the Invisible. If there has ever been born a race which has been able to perceive the existence of Spirit behind Matter, it is the Hindu race. He has idealized his Idolatry. It is not animism, but *Idealism.* The whole psychology of his idol-worship is in symbolism. He tries to fix his mind upon one particular thing, living or non-living, and thereby to see the Invisible in the visible, the Spiritual in the material. It is the Hindu who because he understood the real meaning of idolatry, understood the real meaning of art. "Beauty is inherent in spirit, not in matter." In making images of gods, the artist should depend upon spiritual vision only, not upon the appearance of objects perceived by the senses.

Idolatry is not what the European generally understands it to be. The Hindu worships God under various names and various images, but

these are all the expression or *manifestation* of God as he appears to His particular devotee. God is not known merely as Father, He is known to us as the Indwelling Spirit of all the relations and interrelations which arise in our breasts, all the different purposes of heart and soul. The Hindu gives a concrete shape to the dream of his life which he dreams all his days. With brush or clay, he paints or moulds his Ideal as He appears to him in the particular mood of his mind. These images are merely representing in different spiritual colours and moods what he witnesses in his Supreme God. God is One and the same, His expressions manifold and varied. "He is One, sages call Him by many names." These names are expressions; the Hindu portrays an image of the expression, that is all.

One who knows the system of worship in India, knows that many of the images which he makes out of clay he throws into the river after worshipping the symbol for a few days. He does this, why? Because he knows that these images are nothing, but only the means to an end. If the music is necessary for the worship in the churches, if the church is necessary for the congregation to gather together, if the Cross is an inevitable symbol of a great Ideal, is not the image also a means of concentrating the heart on the God beyond the image? The image is to the worshipper his known quantity which leads him to the Unknown.

What, then, is idolatry? Are there no idols in the West? Idols of gold, idols of fame, idols of power? The Hindu has but one idol, the idol of

God. In the West, people often have a picture of a friend, father or mother, or loved one. Sometimes they even place flowers before it; but if the Hindu makes offerings to the memory of his parents, or brings fruit, flowers, and the fragrance of incense to his temple, he is a "heathen." God is everywhere. This no one understands better than the Hindu. Even Christian bishops have been astonished to find that the poorest and apparently most illiterate peasant understands the immanence of God, not as a doctrine, but as a reality. Where there is great love, the heart naturally centres around something associated with the one loved. Where there is great love for God, the same is true. Mothers often worship God as the Holy Child, and bathing the reflection of its image in a mirror, say, "This that we bathe is not the image, neither is the image that which we worship." That which they worship is the Divine Ideal of perfect Love. "Do we love our children less, whatever they do? So should one love God." "We love most that which needs most. So one should love God." And their concentration on the image of the Holy Child helps their realization of this ideal of love for God.

The Hindus have always understood the value of concentration. Their sages understood in a marvellous way the variety of human experience and the consequent various needs of human nature.

Hinduism is a vast cathedral with side-chapels for all the religions of the world. A family of religions with one heart-home, the Father, or more truly in India the Mother, at the head. God is all that not only the human mind, but also the

human heart can conceive. He is both impersonal and personal, with form and without form; both manifest and unmanifest, the One and the many.

"The Hindu's belief in gods and goddesses no more makes his religion polytheistic than the Catholic Christian's belief in angels makes Catholicism polytheistic, or the faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost makes Trinitarian Christianity tri-theistic." God is in all. He is in the forces of Nature, and He is in every human heart. Is there any great difference between the idea of angels and of gods and goddesses? If there are innumerable forms of life lower than man, is it not at least scientific to conceive of innumerable forms higher than man? If every drop of water is full of invisible life, is it not equally possible that the ether is full of ethereal life invisible to our grosser senses? Christianity speaks of guardian-angels as the ministers of God. What are they but gods and goddesses, that is, spiritual entities, like human beings, but with greater powers? Does this take away from the Unity of God any more than our own personalities take away from that unity?

But it is not even necessary to posit a polytheism in that sense behind the "idolatry" of the Hindus; for the images used in worship are invariably those of some Avatar, like Rama and Krishna and Buddha, as the Christians use the picture or image of Christ, or they distinctly represent some human attribute of God. Since Vedic times we no longer have nature gods and goddesses, of which, so far as is known, images were never made, but God is worshipped

under the trinity of Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu, as the Creator, the Destroyer (or rather the Purifier) and the Preserver. Brahma is more an abstraction of the intellect, and the name is used for the Supreme God in His attribute as Creator. Popular worship is divided between Shiva and Vishnu. Shiva is God as Purifier, the destroyer of evil; Vishnu God as Preserver, the Saviour. Along with this trinity and traversing it, as it were, is the doctrine of duality.

"The highest philosophical speculations of the Hindus have always posited two ultimate principles, called *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. One is the principle of permanence, the other of change." These two principles correspond in a general way to the idea of God and Nature in the West, Nature in this sense including Humanity. Again, *Prakriti* represents the feminine element, and *Purusha* the masculine element in the universe. This duality runs through the trinity of the intellect, the will and the heart, as expressed in the Vedanta philosophy where *Purusha* is *Ishwara* or Brahma, and *Prakriti Maya*; in the followers of Shiva where Shiva is *Purusha* and *Prakriti* the Divine Will as Mother; and in Vaishnaivism where Krishna is *Purusha* and *Prakriti* is Radha, the perfect Devotion of the Heart to the Beloved.

Thus there are various paths that one may take, but they are all only means to an end and that end is to find God. "I bless each worshipper after the manner in which he worships Me; mankind in every way pursues My own path." This is perhaps the highest and the greatest principle that the

Hindu has received to work upon. Because of this he has never burnt any heretic; in fact he has never looked upon any one as a heretic. His land has been the land of freedom for all religions, however antagonistically the followers of any sect may have attacked the principles of Hinduism. The Hindu knows that God is the Indweller of every heart and soul. In Hinduism there is no sect, hence no sectarianism. All the different cults are simply the growth of the human mind in its relation to the Universal. He does not condemn, therefore, either Moslem or Christian.

A Hindu will readily grant a piece of land for the building of mosque or musjid, he will with equal promptness offer it to the Christians for the building of their cathedrals or churches. He thinks that man must grow by his *swadharma.* A religion of real growth will never say, "Throw away that faith and accept mine." It will say, "Try to grow within the law of your own being." A religion of creed says, "Your religion is bad; accept mine and you will be saved." The Hindu salvation is different. It is the liberation of his soul from *Avidya* (ignorance), this he tries to accomplish, not by accepting any particular creed, but by developing his spiritual powers through training and discipline. And this training and discipline is the very life of a Hindu. All his attention is directed towards that. Training and discipline are not his end, but he knows his training and his discipline to be means, and a very great means, to his end—the realization of God in all things.

It is only in Hinduism, I think, that we have the conception of God in *all* the human relations of life. Christianity has the conception of God as Father. To Islam God is the Great Friend. But why should God be conceived of in only one relationship? Do they not all belong to Him? The Hindu worships God in every relation. In the path of *Bhakti*, or devotion, the disciple is taught to think of God in the four great human relationships, *Dasya* or that of a servant to his master, *Sakhya* that of friend to friend, *Batsalya* that of a child to parent or parent to child, and *Madhur* that of lover and beloved. These are the natural cords of union between soul and soul. They are the means of reaching the heart of God. For God is a Heart as well as a Soul. He is "absolutely divine and absolutely human, for it is perfect humanity that is perfect divinity." If God were an Abstract God, He could have little to do with humanity. If God were abstract God, Creation would be impossible. It is because God is Love that He "willed Creation to be;" for Love must by its very nature express itself. "Love must ever give; by its own law of love it must create new objects for its love, and thus the Universe was formed, the human Heart of God." From God who is Love has Creation come, and all Creation is ever seeking the Home from whence it came. Through the devotion of the heart, the devotee becomes one with the Beloved; yet is there ever a union beyond union, a joy beyond joy, a love beyond love in the Infinite Heart.

It is this human note in his realization of the

"One whose Glory is Loving," that fills the heart of the devotee with a rapture that has overflowed in the wonderful songs of the Vaishnav poets, and has embodied itself in the countless stories of Krishna exemplifying the promise of the Gita that in whatsoever way we worship Him, in that way will He manifest Himself unto us. If we think of God as Father, we shall know Him as the Father; if we think of Him as Friend, He will be to us the Friend; if we think of Him as Mother, He will be our Mother. The Hindus worship God in every relation, but most of all as Mother and Beloved; and this is in harmony with the genius of the nation, which deifies woman. In his worship of woman, the Hindu worships that glory of devotion which in India is sacred and which he recognizes is in general most often found in women. Such is their adoration of it that the greatest saints have wished that they might reach that perfection of love, to worship the Divine One with the absolutely unselfish purity of service and devotion of a loving woman. With the unerring instinct of the heart they have chosen the deepest human relationships to express the most perfect love for God. The Hindu thinks of God as Father, but the idea of Fatherhood is really absorbed in that of Mother as being deeper and tenderer. Mother is worshipped in India. "A yearning love that can never refuse us; a benediction that for ever abides with us; a presence from which we cannot grow away; a heart in which we are always safe; sweetness unfathomed, bond unbreakable, holiness without a shadow—all these indeed, and more, is Motherhood."

Such is the idea of Motherhood in India. That the Mother-heart of God *must* answer the call of its child has sunk deep into the life and the songs of the people—

"If I can call Thee
With the real call, O Mother,
You cannot then keep hiding
From me like this.

I do not know Thy name,
I do not know the call,
I do not know how to speak any word.
That is why, though I call Thee,
I cannot see Thee,
And my whole life is spent
In crying for Thee.

I eat Thy bread,
I put on Thy garments,
But I forget to take Thy name.
Teach me then, Mother,
The real call.
Teach me how to call Thee,
Or come Thyself."

"I am Thy ungrateful child, Mother,
I am Thy ungrateful child.
I have time for everything, but no time
To take Thy name.
I am Thy ungrateful child, Mother,
I am Thy ungrateful child.

I forget always to see Thy smile,
Though it always falls upon me,
That smile never fails,
But yet I do not see,
I am Thy ungrateful child, Mother,
I am Thy ungrateful child.

Laughing with me, Thy child,
Thou dost ever walk around me.
I see Thee, yet I do not see Thee,
What a mystery it is !
I am Thy ungrateful child, Mother,
I am Thy ungrateful child.

I have seen Thy smile, I have seen Thy smile,
I must keep it now with all my care,
Day and night within my heart, O Mother.
I am Thy ungrateful child, Mother,
I am Thy ungrateful child."

A religion that has no place for God as Mother will never take root in India.

In the worship of the Virgin in the Roman Catholic Church there is an approach to the idea of the Motherhood of God; and in such deeply devotional books as the *Imitation of Christ,* we have the *Voice of the Beloved.*

> "Whosoever is not ready to suffer all things, and to stand resigned to the will of his beloved, is not worthy to be called a lover."
>
> "Every lover prepares the best and fairest abode for his dearly beloved; for hereby is known the affection of him who entertains his beloved."
>
> "Oh, that it were given me to find Thee alone, that I may open my whole heart to Thee, and enjoy Thee as my soul desires; that Thou alone mayest speak to me, and I to Thee, as the beloved is wont to speak unto his beloved."
>
> "Oh, that with Thy presence Thou wouldest wholly consume me, and transform me into Thyself, that I may be made one spirit with Thee by the grace of inward union, and by the melting of ardent love !"

This is perfectly in harmony with the spirit of the Radha-Krishna songs in India; but in general

the idea of God as Mother and as Beloved is foreign to the mind of the West. The songs of Radha and Krishna which are sung all over India, and have been sung for centuries, are the songs of the perfect and absolute devotion of the heart to the Beloved. So sang Chandidas—

" This precious jewel
Of Radha's love
I wear upon my heart :—

O Beloved, what can I say?
My heart cannot speak,
Only I want Thee, Thee only,
In life, in death, in birth,
    Take me to Thee!
    Take me to Thee!

Thou hast bound my heart to Thy feet
In the knot of love.
All that I am is Thine,
I am only a part of Thee,
I kiss Thy feet.
O Beloved, what can I say?
    Take me to Thee!
    Take me to Thee!

I live in Thy love,
In all the three worlds
There is nothing for me.
Where can I go?
This side, that side Gokul's stream,
There is nothing my own,
Homeless I come to Thee,
Thy lotus feet are my refuge,
I want Thee only,
    Take me to Thee!
    Take me to Thee!

Do not keep me away
To try my love,
I who cannot speak,

Who cannot move.
Everywhere I look
I see only Thee,
I want Thee, Thee only, Beloved !
    Take me to Thee !
    Take me to Thee !

The heart within me is Thy heart,
If I see not Thy face each moment
It dies at Thy feet.
Give me life, my Beloved !
    I want Thee ! Thee only,
    Take me to Thee !
    Take me to Thee ! "

The same spirit breathes in the songs of Rabindranath, whose poetry, now wondered at in the West, is simply the natural flowering of the Vaishnava culture—

" Yes, I know,
This is nothing but Thy love,
O Beloved of my heart—
This golden light that dances upon the leaves,
These idle clouds sailing across the sky,
This passing breeze leaving its coolness
Upon my forehead.

The morning light has flooded my eyes,
This is Thy message to my heart.
Thy face is bent from above,
Thy eyes look down in my eyes,
And my heart has kissed Thy feet."

That God must answer the sincere cry of the heart, is the unalterable faith of the Hindu. " Thou didst call, I am here," says Krishna to Narada, the sweet singer and devotee. " O, Narada, I am not always found on My throne in My Abode of Love, nor am I always found in the hearts of gods and *yogis.*

But where My Name is intoned in the voice of love in the heart of the devotee, there am I ever and always found, My Narada."

Thus for more than 5000 years the Hindus have been realizing their ideals through the various paths of the heart, the mind, the soul. Many a time their idealism has been in danger of being desecrated. Then there have come great and mighty ones to adjust their life to the traditional path of spiritual culture. The cultural ideal has been the note kept through all the ages. No such thing as a particular creed, no such thing as a particular religion. Five thousand years ago the mighty genius who came to give us a great awakening was perhaps the greatest of these—Sree Krishna. Then came Guatama Buddha. Guatama Buddha left his palace home, wife and babe, to seek the ideal. He realized it. When our Hindu ancestors for the time being forgot the true Path and were busy in rituals and ceremonies without entering into the meaning, Guatama came and said—

> " Not by flowers or sandal powder,
>   Not by music's heavenly strain,
> Is the soul's true worship rendered,
>   Useless are these things and vain !
> But the brother and the sister,
>   Man devout and woman holy,
> Pure in life, in duty faithful,
>   They perform the worship truly ! "

It was in Buddha's time that the doctrines of *Karma* and Reincarnation received particular emphasis, though they are clearly stated in the *Gita*. " What ye sow, ye reap," even in birth after birth;

that is the doctrine of *Karma*. Buddha's life and the Brotherhood of his disciples established for the first time in the history of civilization the Monastic Order. Kings embraced his faith. Women embraced his monastic ideals and formed sisterhoods. Thousands flocked round him and his disciples, and for centuries he remained the adored of the many. "I take my refuge in the Name of Buddha" is the devout prayer of thousands to-day. But the Buddhist type of worship, because of the credal character given to it by his successors, could not last long in India as a religion. It was absorbed into Hinduism. The most essential part remained. It had fulfilled the twofold mission of purifying the existing ritual in India, and of carrying the Hindu thought into other countries in the way best suited to their peculiar characteristics and institutions. Its unparalleled Monastic Order established a Brotherhood where even the lowest animals had their place. The essentials of Buddhism are the same as those of Hinduism, and the much discussed Nirvana of the Buddhists is the same as the Hindu idea of Realization or *Yoga* (Union-with-God); the losing of the personal egotistic self in the larger Self of God. "He that loses his life shall save it." The idea that Nirvana is annihilation is well answered by the words of the Buddhist High Priest in Ceylon to Edwin Arnold: "How should Nirvana be annihilation when our Lord had attained Nirvana while he still existed, and being already Buddha, moved about in the sight of men?" Buddha is considered one of the great Avatars. In India his teaching became ultimately another grand note in the realm

of inquiry, and remains to-day as the everlasting possession of the Hindu race.

Then came the great Sankara, who emphasized once more the path of *Jnana* or knowledge; and from the twelfth century down, a series of great teachers, Ramanuja, Ramananda, Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya, who developed the spirit of *Bhakti* to a wonderful height. They all came to stir up their people to carry on the Ideal. They came when India was falling into the evils of forgetfulness, to call her back to the Mother—

" Listen, listen, Mother is calling again,
Night and day is plucking the strings of the heart.
Come, Children, come!
How many Avatars of the ages
Came to us and went away,
Giving us this call!
The Mother's call is in our very breath:
Come, Children, come!
Let us go, let us go, Brother,
Crossing the ocean of this world!
Let us go to the Mother!"

But beneath the surface of all the different movements, the one grand note that encircles and throbs in them all is the note that was struck by Humanity's first Apostle, Sree Krishna. Krishna is the central name in both Indian history and Indian religion. He is to the Hindus what Christ is to Christianity, though in a more complex way. To some he is simply the human Ideal, as Christ is to the Unitarians; to the majority of Indians he is the greatest of the Avatars, as Christ, to the orthodox Christians, is the one Avatar. For to the Hindu conception,

God has revealed Himself in human form, not once, but many times. As the *Gita* says—

> " I come, and go, and come. When Righteousness
> Declines, O Bharata ! when Wickedness
> Is strong, I rise from age to age, and take
> Visible shape, and move a man with men,
> Succouring the good, thrusting the evil back,
> And setting Virtue on her seat again."

Whatever the belief in the relative humanity and divinity in the great Teachers of the world, Krishna is the Great Teacher. It is he who struck for the first time in the history of evolution the doctrine of Harmony, Oneness of all life, Oneness of all paths to God. This doctrine is not only the legacy of the Hindus, but of the world. *Karma* (Service), *Jnana* (Knowledge), *Bhakti* (Devotion), these principles are everlasting ideals. All these three must move in harmonic speed. Each is necessary for the other, and thus there must be harmonious growth of the human soul, the human mind, the human heart.

Sree Krishna said—

> " Action is inevitable. But, let then, the motive for action be in the action itself, and not in the event. Do not be incited to actions by the hope of their reward, nor let thy life be spent in inaction. Lay aside all desire for any benefit to thyself from action, make the event equal to thee, whether it be success or failure.
>
> " Whoever in acting dedicates his actions to the Supreme Spirit and puts aside all selfish interest in their result, is untouched by sin, even as the leaf of the lotus is unaffected by the waters.
>
> " That man who sees how inaction may be

action, and action may be inaction, is wise among men; he is a true devotee and perfect performer of all action.

"He is considered to be an ascetic who seeks nothing and nothing rejects, being free from the influence of the pairs of opposites.

"No one without having previously renounced all intentions can be devoted."

It is Sree Krishna who has become the great Ideal of the Hindu race. He includes all Paths. Work is indispensable, says Krishna, but you must do that work which is worth doing, and when you work must have no desire of your own in the work. Dedicate all to God. His injunction is perfect *Yoga* or communion with Him who is the author of All. The high and noble teachings of Sree Krishna have been embodied in that greatest book, the *Bhagavat Gita*. To any one who wishes to understand the ideals of Hinduism, I would say, "Read the *Gita*." The *Gita* is an epitome of the Vedas in simple, harmonized and humanized form.

These principles the true Hindu seeks to demonstrate throughout the whole of his life. He will serve his family, his race, his nation, in fact the whole universe; yet sink all desires of his own in dedication of all service to God. He will have to acquire knowledge, not for the sake of power, but to serve humanity, and in this knowledge he will know the secrets of the Universe. He will have to acquire *Bhakti* or devotion because that is, after all, the highest step, the gate he will have to enter. "Humility is the softened shadow of My love. It is the grace of all graces that I on

My children bestow." What is man after all? He is *His* Beloved and in *Him* is our Refuge. Such is the Hope when all hopes are shattered. This is the supreme message of the *Gita*—

> "Take My last word, My utmost meaning have!
> Precious thou art to Me; right well-beloved!
> Listen! I tell thee for thy comfort this.
> Give Me thy heart! adore Me! serve Me! cling
> In faith and love and reverence to Me!
> So shalt thou come to Me! I promise true,
> For thou art sweet to Me! And let go those
> Rites and writ duties! Fly to Me alone!
> Make Me thy single refuge! I will free
> Thy soul from all its sins! Grieve thou not!"

CHAPTER III

CASTE

CASTE is Unity. This may seem a paradox to the West, which has criticized without attempting to understand; but it is the A B C of truth as regards this much-discussed institution. Unity in Variety. The true ideal of caste is an extension of the Hindu family ideal, where each has his rightful place and privileges, and where the ideal of all is service for all. As in the family the elders have the chief obligations and responsibilities while the children have lesser reverence but greater freedom, so the higher castes have the chief responsibility for the welfare of the whole and have to go through many disciplines from which the lower castes, like children, are exempt.

Thus, like all other Hindu institutions, the caste system was also based upon the ideal of spiritual culture. It grew naturally as their civilization grew, adapting itself to race and nation; it developed as they developed. This great institution, so much criticized by the unillumined, remains the wonder of the world, and has aroused keen inquiry as to its longevity. What is it that has kept the Hindu race so intact? Storm after storm has swept over, but it remains. The Hindu is still Hindu. Where

are the ancient civilizations ? In Europe the Roman eagle has fallen, the Byzantine Empire dwindled into pieces; ancient Greece and Carthage are no more. But India lives and renews her youth, treasuring the jewel of her ancient heritage in the stronghold of Caste. Caste has preserved the life and ideal of the Hindu race.

Yet in the West it is deemed an absurdity that in the light of the twentieth century there should exist such a thing as caste in any country. We wonder sometimes if our critics have any idea of what Hindu caste really is. Our institution of caste was evolved for the efficient organization and administration of the country, and proved itself fitted for this purpose better than any social system yet discovered in any part of the world.

Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, these were the three twice-born orders, belonging to the original Aryan stock, who had practically the same rights and privileges. But it is natural for a group of people who work together for a certain time to become to a certain extent a fixed group, with fixed ideals, and these ideals grow amongst them to such an extent that they become practically the very life and breath of that group.

It was natural for the group of people who were thinking all the time about spiritual matters in the forest-universities of India, to think only of the Absolute and to forget the world. Those were the days of the discovery of spiritual truths amongst our forefathers, unequalled, unsurpassed by any nation of the world. It was natural for those who were fighting men to honour them and

to see that they were not disturbed in their spiritual studies and were protected from the surrounding enemies then in India, the non-Aryans. At the same time, it was natural that both those who were busy in the matters of spiritual discovery, and those who were protecting them, should be fed, and fed properly. So there arose a class whose duty was to look after the economic problem.

The first class of the people, who were busy in spiritual discovery, was called "Brahmin," the second "Kshatriya," the third class "Vaisya"; but all these three classes had the same rights and privileges. These were the necessary component parts of the great Hindus that had settled in India. They conquered the non-Aryans, who by race and tradition were inferior. After their gradual conquest, these also became members of the Hindu family, but with inferior rank. These are the Sudras. By this means our forefathers protected themselves from interfusion with an inferior race, and at the same time avoided the alternatives that all other Aryan people have deemed necessary, slavery or extermination. The Sudra had his own rights and privileges, respected by all the other castes.

It is worthy of note that in the Hindu system, the highest caste was not that of the greatest worldly power, as in other social systems to-day. The Brahmin was above the King, by virtue of his greater renunciation and discipline. The pure Hindu Brahmin is, from the Vedic period until to-day, the same. He has never earned any money. He does not earn any money to-day. His vocation

was teaching; that it is to-day. His house is a simple house. His wife a humble woman; she wears no ornament save her wedding bracelet made of conch-shell; she devotedly serves her husband and the students who surround him. He does not take money, but he feeds hundreds of disciples. He is supported by the rajahs and the people; for it is considered a sacred duty and privilege to sustain those who are the conservers of spiritual learning. He has nothing for the morrow. By culture and tradition, he lives by faith. He trusts in God, and God feedeth him.

There is a story of Krishna told in all the villages of India which illustrates this beautiful faith that God careth for us more than we can ask or think: A Brahmin was copying the text of the *Gita*; "They who depend on me, casting aside all care, whatsoever they need, I myself carry it to them." Pondering on the text, it seemed to the Brahmin irreverent to think of the Lord as Himself carrying food to His devotees, and he decided that the word "carry" must be an error. He therefore erased it carefully with his penknife and substituted the word "send." A few moments later, as he rose to go to bathe in the Ganges before eating, his wife came to him with a troubled face and told him there was no food in the house. The last had been given to a guest. "Do not be troubled," said the Brahmin gently, "let us call upon the Lord to fulfil His own promise." He had only left the room a few minutes, when a beautiful youth stood at the door with a basket of delicious food. "Your husband called me to carry this," he said, giving

the basket to the Brahmin's wife. But as he lifted his arms she saw that there were gashes above his heart. "My poor boy," she exclaimed, "who has wounded you?" He replied gently, "Your husband wounded me, Mother, before he called me." "My husband!" exclaimed the wife in amazement. "He would not hurt any living thing, not even an insect." But the beautiful youth had vanished, and at the same moment her husband re-entered the room. "How was it possible," she cried in bewilderment, "that you could have cruelly hurt the beautiful boy whom you sent here with food?" "I sent no food," said the Brahmin, "I have not left the house." Then the eyes of the husband and wife met, and they knew who had brought the food, and that they had wounded the heart of the Lord by doubting the perfection of His promise. And the Brahmin restored the sacred text to its original form: "They who depend on me, casting aside all care, whatsoever they need, I Myself *carry* to them."

The Brahmin is respected, not because he is called Brahmin, but because of the renunciation and sacrifice that he has lived up to and placed before his country. By keeping the spiritual fire burning round him from the ancient days, he has been a power in the land. He teaches his students the spiritual truths. In the laboratory of Nature he found his ample elements. He never dreamed of dreadnoughts and super-dreadnoughts, Zeppelins and airships; he conjured not dum-dum bullets or poison gas. His one message was the message of spirituality and by that gift he has made his country what she has been, is, and shall be. Kings were

afraid of the Brahmins. Who will not stand in awe before such an ideal of sacrifice and renunciation? The King sends food and raiment regularly for thousands of students. He serves with his material-treasures as the Brahmin serves with his treasures of learning.

Brahmins used to live in the forest and on the river banks. They made sacrifice and ablutions with fire and water, the sacred symbols of their life and culture. When a Brahmin comes to any social function, he comes bare-footed, simple in dress, but all the assembled guests stand in his honour. He does not seek honours, but, honours seek him. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and all these things shall be added unto you." Our forefathers have sought always the Kingdom of Heaven, and they found, like Jesus, that "the Kingdom of God" is not without, but within.

India has caste; the West has class. Caste is internal; class external. Caste is cultural and spiritual, its ideal, mutual obligation and service. Class is credal and material, based on arbitrary ideas of superiority and material power. Class feeling dominates everything in the West. In India, with all our caste, there was never either class feeling or race antagonism. These have come with Western influence. Missionaries coming to India form a caste of their own, really mixing very little with the people, except for the so-called "saving of souls!" When they have made a convert, he is not received on an equal footing. He has left his own home and he finds, to his surprise, himself really an outcast in the home of his

adoption. He discovers the separation of class and race, undefined, more difficult to contend against than any barriers of caste among his own people.

In the same way the civil service people who come out to India form a caste of their own. They go to rule the people, but they do not try to know them. How can you govern a people unless you know them very intimately? This civil-service class for the most part have not even a superficial knowledge of the Indian people. Yet they write books for their countrymen under such headings as "Real India," "People of India." How dare they write! They have never mixed with the people. It is a myth that the Indians never mix with others, as is sometimes said, and that the social barriers of their life are such that Western people cannot mix with them. There is nothing in the social life of the Hindu to prevent the formation of the strongest friendships between East and West, as is evidenced in individual cases where such friendships do exist. It is the idea of superiority on the part of the West that has made the barriers. If they had fraternized with the Indians the Indians would indeed have accepted them as their own brothers. It is for the interest of the "Christian" Empire to change its programme of life in India. It is significant that in the early days of the Civil Service its members who really settled in India formed strong friendships. These men uniformly speak in the highest praise of the Hindus—

"The people of Bengal are gentle, benevolent,

more susceptible to gratitude for kindness shown them than prompted to vengeance for wrongs inflicted, and as exempt from the worst propensities of human passion as any people on the face of the earth." So says Warren Hastings, who spent many years there.

"The people of India are brave, generous, and humane, and their truth is as remarkable as their courage," is the verdict of Sir John Malcolm; while Sir Thomas Monroe sums up the whole in the following distinguished manner—

"The general practice of hospitality and charity amongst them, and above all a treatment of the female sex full of confidence, respect and delicacy, are signs which denote a civilized people. The Hindus are not inferior to the nations of Europe, and if civilization is to become an article of trade between the two countries, I am convinced that this country will gain by the import of cargo."

Such was the opinion of those who knew India. The modern Westerner sees a few waves on the surface of the ocean of Hinduism, and forthwith thinks he has fathomed its depths. He considers that everything Western is superior *because* it is Western. It is the same spirit of arbitrary superiority which develops race-antagonism in the East and class-antagonism at home.

The Hindus, on the other hand, have in their midst an ordered society which is a real brotherhood. The Brahmin looks to the interest of the Kshatriya, the Kshatriya to that of the Brahmin; and the same is true between all the castes. The Sudra is not neglected in any way. When our

Sudra servants come to our houses, our children call them either brother or uncle. In national festivals and ceremonies, we not only give presents to our own kinsmen and relations, but to all the people who are necessary factors in our composite life. They invite us and we invite them. They come to our *Pujas*, we go to theirs. When a Sudra suffers mentally or physically, the Brahmins take care of him. Wife or children go to his house and do everything for him. One caste is indispensable to the other, and in our religious observances, our injunctions are such that the Brahmin cannot perform them without the Sudra. The Brahmin must feed the Sudra, must love him as his own child. A Brahmin at the time of dinner may not touch a Sudra, but it is not only a Sudra, his own son may not touch him. He considers that eating is a sacrament, to be sacredly performed. He realizes in this sacrament that he is eating the very breath of God. It is not hatred, it is realization. It is not for division, but for higher union. Every function of daily life to a Hindu is his devotion, through which he tries to realize his God. The Hindu never eats as the animals do. It is his prayer. It is his devotion. He does not eat with the Sudra, but he does not love him less. Where can the other three castes stand, whose scriptures say that the whole universe is their relation, if they cannot love the Sudra as they love the members of their own family? The Sudras are a very part and parcel of the family,

In every Indian village, and even in a big city, all the caste people live as a necessary factor of

each other, the Brahmin being the presiding genius, whose main work is to awaken spirituality, which is the motive power to all our human action. At *Pujas,* marriages and other ceremonies the whole community is invited, sometimes several thousand people. At all special festivals, the rich householder distributes gifts to all, as much as he can according to his means. The poor man also gives; perhaps some sort of work. But there is no compulsion. It is only the mutual exchange of greetings in the one big family.

The division of this community-family of the Hindus into caste groups was evolved for the division of labour, and the giving to all of the right of equal opportunities within his own particular sphere. But "equal opportunities" in the Indian sense is very different from what it is in the Western. In the West, equal opportunities means equal opportunities for material education and power; so that if X can buy a motor-car, or become a Member of Parliament, Y can have a chance to do the same. This is not the view in India. In India, by equal opportunities we understand that each and every member of any caste-guild is free to fulfil his *dharma,* or ideal. In India we think that the fulfilment of the three functions of life—service, knowledge and devotion, is the fullest privilege. The particular group assigned to him does not matter so much, since this life is only one bar of the music of God, and each note has its own sweetness. All serve. The Brahmin must serve his race and nation by giving spiritually. If he does, he is a Brahmin; if he does not, he falls

from his ideal. So also the Kshatriya, he must serve, through knowledge of his *dharma* and devotion to it. The Vaisya must serve by providing the necessaries of life for those who protect and teach; and he must do it with knowledge and devotion. Service, knowledge, devotion; these are all common properties or equal opportunities of all classes of people. All must be done for God. In India it is this service, this knowledge, and this devotion that is the ideal.

Now it may be said, where rests the Sudra? The Sudra has also the same privileges. But being taken originally from the non-Aryan class, and of an inferior type, he was not given work beyond his capacity; but he was given opportunity to develop his heart and soul according to the same ideal. Every function of a Sudra's life was to him his *dharma*. There he developed himself to the ideal of service, knowledge and devotion. Every one in Hindu society has the privilege of developing his *dharma* in his own caste-guild. The highest knowledge to the Hindu was the knowledge of God, devotion to God, and service to Humanity. For that they had common privileges and equal opportunities; for the rest, they enunciated the first principle of political economy centuries before Adam Smith was born.

True only the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas could read the Vedas, and the Sudras were debarred. One does not give higher mathematics to children; but if to know the art of service and knowledge, faith and devotion, is the ideal of human life, the Sudras of India were more privileged than any

people in the world. After their day's work, they used to flock round the pandit, and do to-day, to hear him expound the highest teachings, in a language and in a way understood by all.

Caste in India has never brought any class division. In India the division between one caste people and another is not due to any distinction between man and man. The Brahmin has never quarrelled with his Sudra neighbour, nor has a Kshatriya ever made any attempt to thrust his sword into his neighbour's breast. If hatred has come between caste and caste, at any time, it has sunk into the ideal of Brotherhood again. All the religious reformers who have appeared in India have proclaimed this ideal of Brotherhood. They have sought not to do away with caste, but to purify it, to bring it back to the ideal. These reformers have come from all ranks and grades of classes, even from Mohammedans; but they are equally respected by all our people.

The *Gita* says: "The sage looketh equally on a Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog and the lowest outcast." India is full of songs and stories expressing the truth that "All is One." There can be no distinction between man and man for the Divine Spirit is in all.

Sankara, the great Hindu philosopher and reformer, was one day coming from his bath in the Ganges when a drunken outcast accidentally touched him. "How dare you touch me?" he exclaimed. The outcast replied that since the same Supreme Spirit is in all, how could his touch contaminate, and proceeded to expound the

philosophy of Oneness. Sankara listened in wonderment and humbly acknowledged that he was right. Whereupon the outcast stood revealed as Shiva Himself, and Sankara fell at His feet.

Caste is not, as often thought, stereotyped. It is elastic, but elastic under certain rules and restrictions. It originated in a common agreement about certain things. It still exists on that principle. It has brought out a spirit of Brotherhood, the ideal of which is to sink all differences of passions and prejudices; to work in one's own guild yet contribute to the race and to the nation an ideal of federation, an ideal of communism. This Idealism has held the Hindu race. Form without spirit is lifeless, and whatever faults exist in the caste-system to-day are due to a loss of the true spirit of caste, partly from foreign influence, and largely to the consequent decline of the *ashrama* system of education of which I shall speak later. It is to a revival of this system that we must look for a revival of the true spirit of caste. Changes will come, as they have always come, but they must be as they have always been, *from within.*

When our forefathers immersed themselves in the sacred rivers, they used to think and pray that the waters of their country might enter into their very soul. They did it with the ideal of linking themselves with all the people that inhabited their Motherland. The Hindu never built in hatred. Hatred was never his foundation. It was always Oneness. He has adapted his social ideal to the progressive genius of his race. He is unique in that. His growth is from within, and from within

he will to-day and in the future build his ideal for the coming race. Whatever the form of his civilization, the spirit expressed therein has always been that of Brotherhood, of Harmony, of Oneness ; beautifully sounded in the following song, sung even by the nautch-girls of India—

> " O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities !
> Thy Name, O Lord, is Same-sightedness,
> Make of us both the same Brahman !
>
> One piece of iron is the Image in the Temple,
> And another, the knife in the hand of the butcher,
> But when they touch the philosopher's stone,
> Both alike turn to gold !
>
> One drop of water is in the sacred Jumna,
> And another is in the ditch by the roadside,
> But when they fall into the Ganges,
> Both alike become holy.
>
> So, Lord, look not upon my evil qualities !
> Thy Name, O Lord, is Same-sightedness,
> Make of us both the same Brahman ! "

CHAPTER IV

THE FOUR ASHRAMAS

THE *Ashrama* life is the very root of the spiritual culture of the Hindu. Whatever of Idealism he has developed in his country has been very largely due to this age-long system, in which from the very early days of his civilization he has realized all the possibilities of building up an ideal for the individual. It is by this system of individual character-training that the Hindu has been able to root deep in his land the ideal of spiritual culture. That the necessary divisions of caste may not breed pride of position or conceit of personality, the individual must go through severe training and disciplines to develop a spirit of self-detachment in the four stages of life—or the four *Ashramas*.

The children of the three higher castes, the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, and the Vaisyas, when they have finished their eighth year go through a ceremonial known as the *Upanayan* (sacred thread) ceremony; after which the boy enters the house of his Guru, who takes charge of him, not for the sake of money, but for the sake of imparting knowledge and wisdom.

This first stage of life is called the *Brahmacharya*, or discipleship. In this *Ashrama*, the vow of

"poverty, chastity and obedience" is taken. The house of the Guru, as are all homes of holiness in India, is very plain and simple. He probably lives with his wife and children, and there receives his young disciple who comes to be made fit for the different positions he will occupy in life. The first and foremost knowledge the children of the Hindus learn at the feet of their masters is the knowledge of God. The Guru wants to build up his disciple's ideals and character through training and discipline which will give him a stamp, as it were, in after life, by the strength of which he will be able to meet the disciplines of life itself.

In the *Ashrama* house of his Guru there is observed no caste. All the children live together with the children of the Guru himself on absolute equality, whatever the rank or caste of their parents. In the Forest-university of India, the home of hundreds and thousands of Gurus, the disciples learned one thing: the knowledge of God; and though varied by modern conditions, the ideal of the *Ashrama* life is to-day the same. The *chelas*, or disciples, study grammar and rhetoric, history and philosophy, law and literature, but the one fundamental note that the Guru tries to impart is the note of harmony in all functions of life.

There, in the house of his Guru, the disciple gets his training for the next stage of life. He learns to love his other caste-fellows, to mingle his joy and sorrow with theirs, and thus prepares himself for that great communistic-life for which India has been so famous all over the world. If the parents of the disciples can send any money, well and good; if not, the

Gurus are supported by the people, and especially by the local rajahs. Although this system of support, based on the Hindu idea of the sacredness of learning, has been somewhat modernized by Western civilization, still in the Indian states and principalities it is very prevalent. It is only the lure of material civilization that is gradually drawing India out of her own settled ideals. But in spite of all this influence, the Hindu's *Ashrama* life still contributes very largely to the moulding of Hindu character.

The disciple, after going through a period of initiation until he is twenty-five or thirty, comes back home to marry and settle as a householder. This is the second stage of his life, in which he is called the *Grihastha*, or householder. Here he comes in contact for the first time in a wide sense with his village and with his clan. But he enters into this stage of life with all the benefits of the previous training of his mind. He now uses them to help in realizing his ideals. He performs his household duties, not for himself, but for others. He goes to the daily business of his life, but he knows that his business and every function of his life is for the glorification of God. He knows that he is a part of *Prakriti*. He tries to tune himself with *Prakriti*, or Nature, from which he gets the Inner Law of his Being. All individual relations are to a Hindu his sacrament. He adores father and mother as Deity incarnate in human flesh. He loves his brother and sister, and in realizing this love from his childhood, he goes through various symbolic processes and annual ceremonies. He has not

only learned to love his own brother and sister, but the *mantram* that he utters every day, solemnly, helps him to visualize the *universe* as his brother and sister. His alms and charity, the way it is distributed, develops in him a heart and soul, not an organized machine. But whether little or much, he does all for the ideal which ultimately helps him to enter into the next stage of *Banaprastha*, or meditation.

All ideals are the result of introspection. Hindu culture is the result of his meditation. This culture has been uniquely presented to the world through the process of the *Ashrama* life. He begins his life when he enters into the house of his teacher, in meditation, and in meditation, stage after stage, he comes to the highest stage of life. His life's ideal may have been disturbed by the outward rust of life. But that is only temporary. He knows his ideal. If he has forgotten, it is only for the moment. He will rise up to it more fully. You can only see Humanity as it is, through meditation. Meditation is practically both telescope and microscope. Creation is meditation. Through meditation the Hindu realises his God and Humanity, in relations and inter-relations. The sense of eternity and eternal relations with the universe grows deeper and deeper. He is thus prepared to enter into the last stage of life, the stage of *Sanyas*, which means renunciation.

This fourth stage of life is the highest a Hindu can conceive of. This is his highest ideal. The three former stages are only preliminaries. In this stage he renounces the world, but enters into an order of diviner service. He lives no longer specially

for his own family and home. He exists for the larger group of race and mankind. He is beyond caste. Past all limitations. He begins to realize himself as part and parcel of Humanity. The world is his kin.

The great note that the Hindu *Sanyasi* has given to the world is the note of Humanity. Whenever he crosses the doorstep of a householder, he says, "*Narayana, Narayana*," meaning thereby that he is one with Humanity. He has been able to kill his lower self. Only his higher self exists. He has no race, no nation. He is a part of the universe. His religion has developed into God-vision. He communes with Him day and night. He serves the sick, consoles the bereaved. He weeps with those who weep, rejoices with those who rejoice. In the service of others he rejoices himself, and becomes the master of his country and the maker of his destiny. He is more than Brahmin.

It is not only the three caste people who can take to this life. Any one is entitled to this stage, provided he has qualified himself in the previous stages. There are Mohammedan *Sanyasis* who are equally respected and honoured by the Hindus. There have been white *Sanyasis* beloved by the men and women of our country. It is the spirit which touches spirit. The moment you go to India with the ideal of renunciation you touch the Indian heart.

Aggressiveness is not a part and parcel of the Hindu's religion. He does not like that the aggressive spirit should grow in his own land. The *Ashrama* life for all these ages has evolved in every Hindu household an ideal of toleration. His

religion is tolerant, his social structure tolerant, his political ideals tolerant. From the federation of individuals comes the federation of races and nations—the federation of Humanity. It is in the *Sanyasi* that the ultimate conception of the Hindu ideal finds its embodiment.

A Hindu *Sanyasi* is a being apart, yet in closest personal relation. He must do service to others, especially spiritual service, without money and without price. He can only live on what is absolutely necessary. He cannot stop at one place for a long time. He must move from pilgrimage to pilgrimage, inspiring people, and, above all, holding the vision of God as the direct means of spirituality. Thus the four stages of *Ashrama* life lead, as a man ascends by a ladder, from the lowest step to the highest. From discipleship in the house of his Guru, he gradually ascends to the highest pinnacle and ultimately loses himself in God.

To a *Sanyasi* God is everything. By thus losing, he finds his real self. He becomes a great individualistic force. But this individualism of the Hindu is directly opposed to the individualism of Europe. In Europe there is conceit of individualism. This was not the Individualism of Christ. By losing Himself, Jesus became the greatest Individual. But the modern spirit of the West is the accentuation of personality. In the West people say they are free, but they are far from freedom. Their individual liberty is actuated by selfish motives. True freedom is the liberation of the soul. The *Sanyasi* is free because he is above all the limitations of his own personality. He has no interests of his

own. His chief object is to carry his ideal, the ideal of Renunciation. This ideal the Hindu has developed through these 5000 years by the *Ashrama* system of life, culminating in the *Sanyasi*, who is one with God and one with Humanity.

CHAPTER V

KINGS AND PEASANTS

INDIA has been known as the land of Kings and Peasants. All the rajahs and maharajahs that we hear of to-day were originally Hindu kings. India was divided politically into various principalities. But the Indian ideal of kingship comes from the time of Ramachandra in the Ramayanic period. All these kings were federated kings of the vast Indian Empire. There was one who was known as the Sovereign King of Kings. He was called the *Rajchakravarti,* meaning a king in a circle of kings. All minor independent rulers used nominally to pay homage to this sovereign king, but they were all independent in their own states. The wars and battles that people hear of between Indian rulers were not for the greed of territory; but when any king strayed in the wrong path, away from the ideal of kingship, and was injuring his people, then would there be war against him, either to bring him to his senses, or to dethrone him and place his son or some heir upon the throne. But at no time have Indian kings fought between themselves to extend their boundaries. That was not the Hindu ideal. It was far from it.

A king in India was not a mere figure-head, but

the very life of his people. He is the mirror of the people. One of the people, though above the people. His chief duty is Protection: to protect his subjects, who are his children. The king so long as he is able to keep the ideal of kingship. There have been many cases where kings were dethroned by the people—the king-makers. Long before Europe and America had heard of such a thing, the voice of the people was all-powerful in India. This is embodied in the *Ramayana*, when Ramachandra, the King of Ayodhya, banishes his dearly-loved wife for the sake of his people, and she in love and devotion accepts the banishment unmurmuringly for the sake of the people. The world has not been able to equal this matchless ideal of renunciation and devotion. This, even to-day the guiding passion and the kingly ideal, is predominantly the note that has governed all the principles of kingship amongst the Hindus. We must not think for a moment that the present ideal of the rajahs of India has been slackened. Our Indian kings think for the people, do everything for the people, live for the people.

Now let us consider in detail, but briefly, the ideals of Hindu kings in their spirit of government. In the first place we must remember that in ancient India, and by ancient I do not mean very far remote, the land did not belong to the king; the forests, pastures, hills, and holy places were without proprietor. They were supposed to be preserved and kept for all. The king was protector, not *Bhuswani* or landlord. In the *Ramayana* it is said, "Great is the sin of the king who

while accepting his tribute does not protect his subjects as if they were his own children." There are various Shastric injunctions made very strictly to Hindu kings. Says the *Manusanhita*, "The king who does not protect, but takes the sixth share of the produce, becomes a carrier of all the evil of the world." "The king who takes either rent, taxes, presents or fines, and does not protect, surely goes to hell." According to Manu, "the royal share was fixed as a sixth, an eighth, or a twelfth, and was paid in produce. The mutual claims of king and cultivator were very judicially adjusted. It depended on the produce. The king must have his share because of his supervision, the cultivator because of his labour. There was no fixed rent. The taxation was dependent upon the produce of the crops, which varied from year to year, and the producer was not harassed with anxiety as to the payment of his rents if there had been failure of crops due to bad weather or other causes."

The duties of the king were many and varied. Two of the main duties were that he "should provide pasture for the cattle; that he should provide water for irrigation. This he had to do by the excavation of tanks, wells and canals, for the development of agriculture." Those who have read the *Mahabharata* will perhaps remember the story where Narada, "the great Brahman Rishi, came one day to King Yudisthira and asked him if he had provided large tanks well filled with water, suitably distributed in each different part of the kingdom; for agriculture, said Narada, will not thrive if it has to depend on the rains." He asked also if he

had taken proper care to see that the husbandman's stock of seed had not run out.

The third duty of the king was the "protection of the people from thieves and robbers." It is interesting to notice that in those days the king not only had to take means to get back stolen things, but if he failed to do so had to make good from his own treasury. When Yudhisthira ruled, and a thief had stolen some cows belonging to a Brahmin, the Brahmin presented the matter to Arjuna, saying, "The king who accepts the sixth of the produce as his share, but does not protect his subjects, is said to be responsible for the sins of the world." Arjuna heard and said, "If I do not give relief to this man crying at my gate, the king shall have committed the great sin of neglect of duty." So saying, he entered Draupadi's room, took his bow and arrows, went with the Brahmin, overtook the thieves, recovered the cattle, and restored them to the Brahmin.

But in all these affairs the kings were not without councillors. The ancient Hindu polity was built centuries ago on a very psychological and far-seeing basis. Each king had an executive council. According to rank the Priest of the king's family came first, though his part in the council was chiefly of adviser. He commanded great reverence, but his work was rather for the spiritual ministrations of the state. After the priest came the *Pratinidhi*, the Viceroy or prime minister, who represented the king in various state functions. His chief work was to advise the king upon the various questions that arose in administration. Not only that, but he had also the

implied power, sanctioned by the king and people, to make the king do that which was best to be done. If it happened sometimes that the king did not want to act upon the advice given to him, the *Pratinidhi* must wait and use his persuasion until he succeeded in making the king do all that was needed. He was, in fact, the responsible person, practically the head of the administration. After him came the *Pradhana*, or chief Secretary of the State. His duty was to supervise the general work of the state, to keep control of expenditure, check accounts and so forth. Next to him in rank came the War Minister. He was entitled the *Sachiva*. The *Sachiva* was supposed to advise about everything connected with war; know the strength of the army, devise plans as to how best to train and feed the troops, keep them ready whenever their services should be necessary, and report to the king from time to time as to the condition of the forces.

We must remember that the Indian kings were all *Kshatriyas*. Their chief point in keeping the army was not spoliation or extermination of other lands or people, but only to protect their own from aggressive attack. All diplomatic affairs were managed by the *Mantri*, or Foreign Secretary. He had to study "when, how, and to whom the policies of peace, purchase, partition and penalty had to be adopted and the various effects of each, whether great or small; and having decided on the course of action, to communicate that to the king." Peace was always the object aimed at by the king in his foreign policy, peace with justice. Then there was the *Amatya*, who had charge of lands and land

revenues; and the *Sukraniti,* or general Finance Minister.

These seven *Prakritis,* or ministers, formed the regular ministerial body. Besides them there was the office of the Watcher. His function was "to find out the temper of the people and report the same to the king; so that the king might, with the knowledge so gained, *reform himself.*" Thus the purpose of the Watcher was not to find out the mistakes of the people, but the mistakes of the king in his protection of the people.

The *dharma* that the Hindus implanted in the caste of the *Kshatriyas* was mainly and chiefly the protecting of the people. That protection according to the Hindu ideal, it was understood must be from every standpoint. So the Hindu king was surrounded with different ministers with different functions, each of the ministers practically the representative of the people; and through them, as well as directly in many ways, the Hindu king was always in touch with his people. The Hindu king was more than democratic. He was patriarchal in the true sense of the word. His treasury not for his luxury, but for the maintenance of the poor and needy. The outside world cannot conceive of the wonderful communistic life that the Hindu kings and people lead. In the past, as in the present, they have been the same in ideal. Even to-day they are the protectors of their people.

One of the most significant things we shall notice in our Hindu rajahs is that they also try in all their affairs of life to realize God. The king is the carrier of the culture of his race to the unborn

generations. He goes through every discipline for the building up of his character. It is the personal relation in doing things which really helps us to realize our ideals. If we simply draw a cheque and send it to the poor we are not elevated much above the drawing of the cheque; but if we study their condition of life we feel for them. If we give a glass of water to a beggar we have quenched our own thirst. The relation of the king in matters of charity is very personal.

He very often makes tours. He goes to the places where the Guru teaches his *chelas*, he goes where gather thousands of *Sanyasins* who have been roaming in India from place to place, from pilgrimage to pilgrimage, and he sees how their affairs are managed and has personal talks with them. He builds rest-houses. One cannot imagine how many rest-houses have been built at the king's expense for the poor and needy travellers. In these the door is always open; you take a room for yourself; all your wants are provided for; you stop as long as you please or until you have finished your work. You can travel from one end of India to the other, taking your shelter in these rest-houses. No one will come to you for any tax or rent. If you have money you may give them coin. Thousands of poor travellers are thus taken care of by the rajahs. Thousands of poor people are fed daily from the king's store-house. They are considered to be members of his own family. The question of idleness has not been raised as yet. There is no forced work. The social arrangement of the Hindus has never been to produce machines, but natural growth.

The gift given in simple love is received in the spirit of love and gratitude, and both rich and poor, king and peasant, are lifted to a higher plane of spiritual sweetness and confidence. This spirit of oriental giving remains to-day a great puzzle to those who have not studied the social science of the East. To these, our Brahmins are a curiosity, our kings and their courts an enigma.

If you visit any Hindu court you will notice that even the poorest beggar of the street, if he has a grievance unredressed, has direct access to the king. The rajahs and maharajahs whose names we hear now-a-days in this European war, who have been contributing amounts untold from their resources, are representatives of our *Kshatriya* caste. Visit their places and you will see wonderful social arrangements by which the king and the peasant are tied together in one chain of love. These rajas and maharajas are the descendants of the ancient Hindu kings. In states about as large as Scotland and Ireland, our Indian kings rule. And how do they rule? By love and duty. Centuries ago the Hindus evolved an ideal of government in which all the advantages of a democratic state and an aristocratic state were combined.

Let us imagine the Durbar, or court of the Indian kings which they hold every day, not only once but twice, one in the morning and another in the evening. This Durbar means that the king is present there in the court with all his ministers and the chiefs of other departments, and there they take their seats in the order of their rank with the king in the centre. At the evening Durbar there is a very

beautiful ceremony. They sit under the canopy of heaven. Yonder comes the torch-bearer with two or three people as his companions. The king and his ministers and the whole body of people present stand up the moment they see the first light of the evening, and chant to *Agni*, the God behind the fire. Thus they still keep up that beautiful Vedic ceremony which their ancient forefathers made so full of meaning. The evening Durbar is chiefly a social gathering, most of the business being naturally done in the morning. But at both these times all the people congregate and any one can come to the king and make known his grievance. In this way the king comes in direct contact with his people. He passes his judgments without bias or prejudice, as the people of his territory are all to him the same and the king is above all parties.

The king is very personal and very affectionate. The Hindu thinks the king represents the justice of God. So he centres his loyalty round the king, and in every shape and form renders the king help in his administrative work. It is the injunction to the Hindu king from time immemorial that the king must live, feast, and sleep for the people. *He is for the people, not the people for him.* He is the chief servant of the state. If any subject is so poor he cannot give a marriage dowry to his daughter, it is the function of the king to do so. If a subject has no money to educate his children, he makes appeal to the king. Hundreds of students are supported entirely by the Indian kings. The " King's Gift " is a synonym for unbounded generosity. In everything the subjects look up to the king, and

the king has impressed his court with the same spirit. All the servants of the state are equally accessible to the people.

Not only the king, but also the *Rani*, or queen, takes an equal interest in the affairs of the people, especially the women. While the redress of grievances in matters of justice is entirely managed by the king and his ministers, the queen, or *Rani*, may be appealed to by the poorest peasant woman for help in her personal troubles. The many social functions for women at the palace are personally supervised by the *Rani*. Our *Ranis* have also a great part in setting forth their ideals before the women of their country. They wield this power and make it felt in their husband's kingdom. They also have a great share in the administration of the state. They often help with their advice and wisdom.

We have no set who are called the "plutocracy." Money does not count in India; at least, a century ago it had very little influence in our social life. It may be that in the last century it has brought some division of class instead of caste. India is going through a transition period, and there may arise a class division because of money. Caste has been the backbone of India's life and nationality. It may fall away from its ideal, but it has developed her great communistic life. Against this the division of class cannot make much headway. It must be thrown off as any foreign substance must be thrown out of a body or the body cannot exist. So what is foreign to the genius of the race cannot last long. The race which in the morning of the civilization of mankind received the ideal

in King Ramchandra cannot lose its ideality. Ramchandra, that great King-Ideal of the Hindus, still lives in our national consciousness. The King is for the People.

By the people of India, I mean the three hundred millions of the Hindu population. Besides these there are other classes, Mohammedans, Parsees, and so forth, about sixty millions. But the vast majority of the Indian people are Hindus. In India even the peasants talk of the Absolute. Who are these Hindu peasants? They are chiefly the Sudras. The division of the caste system in India has not been for nothing. It has developed a class of people who, without the knowledge of the three R's, talk of the Absolute, think of the Absolute, and live in the Absolute. And living in the Absolute they think that each and every unit of the universe is their brother.

Who has taught them this ideal of spiritual culture? The Brahmin. Go to an Indian village: you will be given a night's shelter, you will be given food; and in the twilight of the evening the village workers will assemble and will talk of God and His love, and will sing the name of God with a passion of heart and soul that will make the unbeliever believe in the Reality. They will perhaps spend the evening until late at night in singing and singing. They know God as both Divine and Human. In their assemblies they will spend most of the time in conversations on God, the Seen, and Unseen. Cold winter nights they will perhaps light a fire and sit around and talk of the same.

Here and there you will find in village gatherings

of our Indian peasants some one reading either from the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata*, from which sources the Hindu mind, young and old, rich and poor, men and women, equally have drawn and are still drawing wonderful inspirations for their social and religious ideals. The eternal *leela* or action of Krishna, our Indian peasant understands both from the philosophical and the human point of view. He knows for a fact that this life is only a temporary pilgrimage in the world; but he is not to neglect it. He knows that his body as well as his home is the abode of his Krishna—the Lord and Lover of his life. He cleanses his house that it may be the house of his Krishna; he cleanses his body that it may be the Temple of his Krishna. He sings always, his boys and girls sing—

> "This is my Brindaban
> This is my Brindaban
> Sree Krishna is the King in the Forest,
> Here flows the Jumna,
> I hear Sree Krishna's footsteps
> In every leaf-falling,
> In every vein it is His writing
> Even in its very heart.
> Oh, I am His Love,
> He is my Love."

And this is not superficial knowledge, it is realization, and that intense realization has given him absolute faith and a love for the universe as his own. In his little courtyard he has planted a *tulsi* plant, and he goes and sits there in deep devotion and faith. He knows that that plant is not his God, but he realizes his God in the plant. That is

his symbol and through this Nature's one child, he rejoices in the God of Nature, and realizes Him in all things. He will feed the hungry, and by doing that he will think that he is doing it to his Krishna; will clothe the naked, and by doing that he will think that he is clothing his Krishna. Before he goes to his fields or other work he will every day, not casually, but lovingly, dedicate his work to Krishna. Whilst he is tilling his land, while handling the instrument for ploughing, he will not think what parliamentary election will be possible this year, but he will think many times how he will till his very soul which is another land for the growth of God's seed. His very work is a symbol. He will sing in the midday sun, in the scorching rays, he will sing in his sweet simple way which the Indians call the "fieldy-voice"—

> "Till my heart, O Beloved,
> As I am tilling this land,
> And make me Thine
> As I am making this land my own.
> Till my heart, O Beloved!"

The Indian peasants, from far-off Cashmere to the coast of Ceylon, whenever they go out with their corn of the fields and cross the rivers in boats filled with the corn, sing while crossing, in the same inimitable way, with the soulful exuberance of the passion of their hearts—

> "Take me across, O Beloved!
> As I cross this stream
> With the corn.
> I have gathered the corn
> From the field,

But where is the corn
Of my heart?
Take me across, oh Beloved!
Take me across the world—
The stream of life
And be my Helmsman,
O Master of many Crossings!"

They sing of Rama and Sita, of Krishna and Radha—the Ideal and the Idealist, the Lover and the Beloved. They learn from their nation's history and songs, the everlasting possessions of the peasants of India, this devotion and love, and with a heart and a soul full of passion and intensity, realize God and eternity and with it the whole Humanity. The world of "civilization," with telephone and motor-car, will perhaps deride him, because he is simple and half nude. But he has kept his breast open, his heart open, his soul open. He has kept himself as a clean slate. He has kept it for his Lord and Lover to write with His eternal pencil. The Hindu peasant is the very handiwork of God. He is Nature's wonderful production. Who would not like to change a day with him? He will sing the songs of Kavir and Ramdas, Nanak and Chaitanya. He realizes them. He will go to hear the great Pandits expounding the abstruse subjects of the Vedas and the Upanishads. He understands them. And early in the morning after a sultry night of the summer-time he will perhaps take his simple flute of bamboo and improvise a song to the tune of the flute. The soft plaintive tone which will come from a peasant's home in a distant village has melted the hearts of hundreds. In India travellers who

start very early because of the blazing sun of the morning many times stop to hear this distant note coming like a stream! The rider has stopped his horse, the walker his steps, and feels that he has heard the voice of "God walking in His garden in the cool of the day." The stream of music overflows their hearts. In their uplifting of soul even for the moment they have forgotten their ideas of separateness. They open their hearts to God.

In India the religion is music. It is the property of the king as well as the peasant. It is with this music that Sree Krishna enchanted the souls of His devotees. His flute since then is the symbol which awakens all our hearts. All the greatest devotees in India sing. In every shape and form it is the music that elevates the heart of a Hindu. The songs of Chandidas and Jajadeva are sung everywhere in Bengal. There is going on continually one stream of music with different notes. Music is religion.

In the life and history of the Hindu civilization the Indian peasant is a wonderful factor. He knows that God lives in every human being. He bows his head to Him. He bows his head to his king and country. He receives their benediction, and in this benediction the king and peasant meet. There are days of national festival when king and peasant not only meet, but embrace each other—an embrace of the spirit. In this touch they touch God in one another. They embrace God in man.

CHAPTER VI

THE HINDU WOMAN

To a Hindu his home is a Temple, and in that Temple, the Hindu woman is High Priestess. She has kept indeed sacredly the sacred traditions. The first duty that a Hindu woman learns from her cradle is to make home sacred. Sanctity is the watchword of her life. In outward affairs, in household duties, within her heart of hearts, she tries to preserve that sanctity. Purity is her ideal both in body and in mind. Man's training begins when a child, and he goes through his *Ashrama* life stage after stage. Woman has her *Ashrama* life within the home. Education, both for men and women, has not the same ideal in India as it has in the West. In the West education is material and intellectual, in India purely spiritual. Thus woman from childhood grows within such an atmosphere that in her after life, when she attains maturity and becomes the mother of the family, she trains her children up to the same ideal.

Let us consider what are the main factors in moulding the thought and national life of the Hindu woman.

With the growth of her knowledge, she is instructed to take *bratas*, or vows, of various sorts.

She will have, at certain periods of the day or month, to water small plants of her little garden, and some particular plants are impressed upon her mind as something sacred. By serving and protecting the plant, so that its peaceful growth may not be disturbed, she learns to understand its life and to love it as her very own. One of our greatest poets, Kalidasa, describes Sakuntala leaving her father's hermitage, where each plant which she had reared and watered and caressed is weeping to hear of her departure to her husband's house.

Kanna, her foster-father, thus addresses the woods surrounding their hermitage—

"Hear, all ye trees of this hallowed forest; ye trees in which the nymphs have their abode; hear and proclaim that Sakuntala is going to the palace of her wedded lord; she who drank not, though thirsty, before you were watered; she who cropped not, through affection for you, one of your fresh leaves, though she would have been pleased with such an ornament for her locks; she whose chief delight was in the season when your branches are spangled with flowers!"

A chorus of invisible wood-nymphs reply: "May her way be attended with prosperity! May propitious breezes scatter for her delight the fragrant dust of rich blossoms! May pools of clear water, green with the leaves of the lotus, refresh her as she walks! And may shady branches be her defence from the scorching sunbeams!"

It is not only the plant-life that is a recognized part in the Hindu woman's education and training, but love for animals is also a sweetest part of her

childhood. The wonderful care that Sakuntala gave to the deer at the hermitage shows the spirit that runs even now in its fullest intensity in Hindu homes, among the children of the family—especially the little girls.

"Ah! what is it that clings to the skirts of my robe, and detains me," says Sakuntala as she is leaving her forest home.

"It is thy adopted child," replies her foster-father gently, "the little fawn, whose mouth, when the sharp points of *Kusa* grass had wounded it, has been so often tended by thy hand with the healing oil of *Ingudi;* who has been so often fed by thee with a handful of *Syamaka* grass, and now will not leave the footsteps of his protectress."

Sakuntala bursts into tears as she turns to her little pet: "Why dost thou weep, tender fawn, for me, who must leave our common dwelling-place? As thou wast reared by me when thou hadst lost thy mother, who died soon after thy birth, so will my foster-father attend thee when we are separated, with anxious care. Return, sweet thing, return, we must part."

By this training from her childhood, the Hindu woman is initiated into the deepest mysteries of life. This purity and sweetness of character has been preserved to such an extent by the woman of India that she has never been able to bear the thought of animals being killed.

In India animals are killed, but not so much as in other parts of the world, and you will never find a butcher's shop within the range of the village.

Hindus are, as a rule, not meat-eaters. The

Hindu woman does not eat meat. She never cares for it. In India it is not the custom for men to go abroad and eat food prepared by different people. The Hindu, as a rule, takes his meal in his own house. Fire and food are to him sacred, and their purity must be guarded. The preservation of purity in body, mind and in spirit has been primarily the order of Hindu society, and this ideal has been kept up to its fullest extent by the women-folk of our country.

The Hindu woman will not cook any food without first having a complete bath, and she will never start any cooking without having made her *pujas*, which does not mean a prayer for ten minutes or so, but a complete disciplinary system of meditation. And in her cooking she tries to infuse her spirit of devotion—her *bhakti*.

The Hindu says that you can tell when food is cooked in love. You can taste the love in it. This is the real spiritual reason for the man's eating at home. Thus in fire and food, as in bathing, strict ceremonials are observed. They originated in love and devotion.

Purification of body, mind and soul, so allied that the disturbance of one is the disturbance of the other, appeared to the Hindu as the foundation principle for the purification of society, and this came into the hands and control of woman as the high priestess of the Hindu ideal.

It is not only in this ceremonial part of life that a Hindu woman is responsible, but she is in fact the very life and soul of the Hindu race. She is herself sacred. She has kept the sacred fire in her

home sacredly. That fire which the Hindu saw and invoked the spirit of in *Agni,* that fire she has kept all these years.

In the Hindu home the fire is unquenchable. Together the bride and bridegroom light the flame which is never allowed to die out. And this fire is a symbol of that spiritual fire which their love shall keep ever burning. That which the Hindu wishes to realize he has been able to keep the vision because of his women. It is they who have held it and still hold it, in spite of the outward influence of the material world.

Teaching in India, both for men and women, has always been to a large extent oral; a method that in many ways cannot be surpassed. The Hindu woman hears the Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas read and expounded. She has a complete knowledge of the mythology and poetry of her own country, with all that that connotes of culture and imaginaion. She understands to a hair's breadth, and realizes in her daily life, philosophical doctrines such as *Maya* and *Nirvana,* which have bothered the heads of more than one Western savant.

Book knowledge is not education. You can have any amount of learning, but if it does not build up character, what availeth it to you? It is a question whether the circulating libraries of the West tend toward character-building in the young. It is character that is the object of real education, as the West is beginning to realize. And that character can never be built without the solid foundation of various disciplines. For this purpose,

bratas (vows) are taken by both men and women in India. These *bratas* are schools to our Hindu women. Through these she learns devotion, intensity of faith, love for every living thing; love and affection for her family, for her clan, for her village, and gradually that love takes her to that higher love which both Hindu men and women share and in which the whole universe is their kin.

There are certain *bratas* by which she tries to realize God in her husband; others, to realize God in her children; still others to realize Him in trees and flowers, in water, in all the elements, in everything "living and non-living," for she knows there is nothing which is not living, nothing in which the life of God does not breathe.

The affection in Hindu families is peculiarly strong. The mother is worshipped. She is the great symbol of the Motherhood of God. And it is this deep love and reverence that makes the Hindu love to call his country, not simply Motherland, but Mother.

The tie between brother and sister is intensely sweet. In India there is one day in the year, called "Brother's Day," on which brothers visit their sisters with presents and receive their benisons. On that day, the sister will rise very early in the morning and gather dew from the grass and flowers. This she places in a small bowl with sandal. She then brings flowers and cocoanuts, sweetmeats of various sorts and rice from the fields, and putting all these things on a new plate, she comes at the appointed time to the place of the ceremony. Brother and sister sit facing each other upon the floor.

The sister puts the dewdrops mixed with sandal upon the brother's forehead, saying, "May you live long and work for God and Humanity." She then places the rice upon his head if he is younger, or if elder, at his feet, and they exchange greetings. If the sister is married, the brother may live at some distance, but he will always come to perform this ceremony, also a symbol of the great brotherhood and sisterhood of the world.

Such ideal the Hindu woman realizes not only in her family and within her own home, but outside the family and outside the home. It is a mistake to suppose that Hindu women are always shut up behind their *purdah*. They are not. But they do not run about in search of diversion.

There seems to be a remarkable idea current in the West that a Hindu wife never sees any man but her husband. This is manifestly absurd. In many Hindu families there are as many as two hundred or three hundred people living together in harmonious freedom under one roof; or more truly, many roofs, since the Hindu houses are built around courtyards. Thus the family forms a community by itself, all the members of which the women naturally see more or less. Moreover, the friends of her childhood, men she has played with from babyhood, as well as the friends of her husband, father, or brothers, are informally welcomed as of the family. She does not, it is true, meet strangers, comparatively unknown to her family, at balls and parties, as women do in the West. But this does not mean that she never goes out of the house. With all her care for the home, she goes out as

much as she wishes; she visits her neighbours, her girl friends, her relatives, goes to distant places, even from country to country.

Where else in the world lived there a race, the women of which went about, before railways and steamships, on foot from pilgrimage to pilgrimage? They did not mind hardship. They do not now. And Hindu pilgrimages are not only to one place, but they are all over India. From the heights of the Himalayas where rests the famous Temple of Kedarnath, to the southernmost part of India and the great Temple of Rameshwar, from the Temple of Juggernath at Puri in the east to Dwaraka with its Temple of Sree Krishna in the west, who go year in and year out? Who are the people that gather together round these wonderful places? Who have kept the sacred traditions of these historic Abodes of Peace? It is the Hindu women. They wear a veil, but that veil of a Hindu woman which covers the head is not to veil her face, but to shadow to a certain extent the purity of her symbolic face. The Hindu woman who ever tries through all the days of her life to realize God in every part of her life, in service and in devotion, she has incarnated in her face the goodness of love and the goodness of purity. She is pure. From beneath the veil of her face, even if covered, there comes like a lightning flash the beauty and the intensity of sweetness that lies behind. She is matchless—matchless because of her devotion as well as her courage.

These two ideals have been so developed in the Hindu woman that they are recognized in India,

and when the history of Hindu women will be written the world will accept their truth. The chief characteristics of Hindu women are courage, humanity and sweetness, and above all a belief in God which they have acquired through their path of devotion.

From time immemorial they have been drawing their inspiration from the life of Sita, the wife of Ramchandra, the great King-Ideal of the Ramayana. "Rama, the son of Dasaratha, went into exile for fourteen years. He wished Sita to stay at home, but Sita, this model of a devoted wife, would not listen to the proposal. She desired to leave home and kindred to follow her lord into the pathless wilderness." From that day the Hindu woman's ideal of life has been fixed. She does not exist alone. She exists with her husband. In Hindu homes the two become one.

"For the faithful woman follows where her wedded lord
may lead,
In the banishment of Rama, Sita's exile is decreed,

Happier than in father's mansions in the woods will
Sita rove,
Waste no thought on home and kindred nestling in
her husband's love!

Therefore let me seek the jungle where the jungle-
rangers rove,
Dearer than the royal palace, since I share my
husband's love,

And my heart in sweet communion shall my Rama's
wishes share,
And my wifely love shall lighten Rama's load of woe
and care!"

Not the ideal of Sita alone. There are hundreds and thousands of nameless Sitas living the same ideal, and Indian literature and history are full of such glorious types of womanhood. Draupadi, whose faith and devotion inspired the Pandava brothers. Savitri, who followed and conquered death to bring back her husband. Damayanti, whose love and courage nothing could daunt. Khana and Lilavati, famous for learning as well as sweetness. Meera Bai, the saint and devotee whose songs of love and devotion rival those of Jajadeva. And of more modern times; Pudmani, the Flower of the Rajputs; the Rani of Jhansi who led her own troops; the Rani Bhabani, Ahalya Bai, and the Rani Swarnakumari, noted for their administrative powers and wonderful charities; all these and many others have set an ideal for which the Hindu race is proud. They have governed states, but their ideal of government first formed itself in the school of the family.

Marriage to a Hindu is not a contract. It is a reunion of the two souls. Two souls actually unite to fulfil the ideal of life, and prepare themselves as pilgrims to realize the fullest spirituality. One cannot surpass the other. In all our social functions husband and wife are equal partners. The moment a man and woman unite in marriage, separation ceases for ever. For good or for evil they are one. In the marriage ceremony each says, "Let the heart that is in me be thy heart, let the heart that is in thee be my heart," then together they watch for the Pole star, the symbol of constancy

and faithfulness. They are one soul. Death cannot separate them.

Suttee was not the forced thing which we read of. It was the ideal of oneness. The Hindu woman did not care to live apart from her husband. Body meant nothing. It may encase the soul for the time being, but that is all. Death is nothing beside eternity with him.

> " Lamp of my life, the lips of death
> Have blown thee out with their sudden breath,
> Naught shall revive thy vanished spark
> Love, must I dwell in the living dark?
>
> Tree of my life, death's cruel foot
> Hath crushed thee down to thy hidden root,
> Naught shall restore thy glory fled
> Shall the blossom live when the tree is dead?
>
> Life of my life, Death's bitter sword
> Hath severed us like a broken word,
> Rent us in twain who are but one
> Shall the flesh survive when the soul is gone?"

" It was a splendid courage and a beautiful faith," says Edwin Arnold, " that inspired these Indian wives. ' Witness that I die for my Beloved by his side,' was the farewell of the Sati. It was not very wrong of me, it may be hoped, to lay a flower upon the carved stone which recorded where the Sati had last set her fearless little foot upon this earth of selfish hearts and timid beliefs." Even now we sometimes hear of women going to Suttee, in spite of legal prohibition. But whether they seek Suttee or not, the ideal of our women remains the same, and she carries the memory of her husband

and her husband alone all through her life. This heroic devotion is found in all our history. When Prithi Raj, the last of the Hindu Emperors, was defeated and slain by the treachery of his foe, and the Mogul Emperor demanded his beautiful wife, Sanjugta, to be his bride, the Empress, putting aside her grief, begged only to be allowed to pay the last rites to her husband. The funeral pyre was prepared, the Mogul Emperor with his men standing by. Then as the flames soared up, Sanjugta, with one cry, "I come to thee, my beloved!" leaped to the side of her husband, and winding her arms around his body, perished in the flames.

Those who have read the history of the Rajputs know the heroic part that Rajput women have taken by the side of their lords. They have encouraged husbands and fathers, brothers and friends, to go and fight or come back on their shields. That was their farewell. Not only that, they themselves, on horseback and on camel-back, have ridden miles and miles and have fought by the side of their husbands to defend their home and country.

This devotion and heroism are the legacy of the Hindu woman to-day. All over India you will find her going from house to house, village to village, to nurse the sick, to console the bereaved. She does not care for the hurry and rush of life. She faces all struggle boldly and devotedly. She may learn many things. She may receive Western education. But the education that she gets every day in her home, her sanctuary, the inspiration she draws from pilgrimage to pilgrimage—these are

the lessons, more than the lessons of the book. She goes, every day almost, in the evening, to hear the expounding of the scriptures, many and varied, by the *pandits* of the country. She stands on the height of love; and from that height speaks to man one word: devotion. By woman we understand devotion. And this ideal she is bequeathing to her race from Vedic times. She gives this message to the world: Devotion.

As in the *Ashrama* life of the man he rises from that discipleship at the feet of his guru and becomes the disciple of the universe, ultimately sinking himself into the vast ocean of Humanity, so the Hindu woman also rises from the bed-rock of her family school, and when she passes middle age she also enters into that last stage of life. There are thousands of Hindu women all over India, widows, mothers of children, who, giving up the entire management of their households to their children or relatives, go about in holy pilgrimage. Whether they wear the *gerua* cloth or not, they are the *Brahmacharinis* or *Sanyasinis* of India. Tremendous is their influence. You will see them at Benares and at Puri, in the heights of the Himalayas, at Ramshwaram, at Dwaraka, at Brindaban. They wear no veil. They have passed that stage of life. They are above ordinary human beings. They are the *super-women* of our country. They spend hours and hours in devotion. Not one or two, but thousands of these sit alone, sometimes in groups, meditating, each in her own way. Religion to a Hindu is individual as well as national and universal.

Picture, not as an hallucination, but as a reality, hundreds of these Hindu women sitting on the banks of the Ganges or the Jumna. Their very look magnifies one's soul. Before them, you feel a holy presence. You feel the Motherhood of God. They look so enchantingly pure. You see them and forget the anxieties of the world. They have conquered the worries of life. These are past and gone. They do not fill their memory any more. To such women Humanity is one. To them sectarianism does not apply any more. They know the *Gita*, they know the *Upanishads*, they know the secret of religion. They will speak of all religions as springing from the same source. They master the very principles, the greatest teachings of Sree Krishna — service, knowledge and devotion. They serve Humanity in every way. They go from door to door, console the people, speak to them, inspire them. They are beyond *purdah*. They are above all. Men respect them as their mothers, respect them as their sisters.

There is a floating rumour in the outside world that all *Sanyasis* are a pest of society; they are idle folk; they are a set-back! But if in any country in the world there is a class of people who deserve our homage, these are the *Sanyasis* and *Sanyasinis*. What an impression they leave behind! Their look, their dress, their footsteps, all awaken a passion for spirituality. They do not speak much, only to the few, but their speech means holiness. They say one sweet word that conveys the whole meaning.

A personal story will not be out of place. I

happened to know a *Sanyasini* at Brindaban, where I spent a few weeks of my life. She had passed middle age, but it is difficult to think of age in connection with them. My little " bower," or grass hut, was just by the side of hers, where she used to sing almost all the day and night. That dwelling of the *Sanyasini* was on the banks of the Jumna, that enchanting stream! What a history is repeated in every wave and wavelet! The waves have heard many a sweet song, sung by the flute of India's greatest ideal and idol, Sree Krishna. Even the peacocks used to dance when they heard that enchantment. That Jumna is still there, and still the same river. The music is there. The songs are there. Nothing is dead. Men and women hear that music and it enters into their hearts and maddens their soul. Not the madness of the world. It is the madness for God. That *Sanyasini* I am speaking of sings in praise of Krishna all day and night in her little grass hut. She bathes in the Jumna every morning before the sun rises, cooks her own food, which is very simple, reads a few lines from the *Bhagavat Gita,* and sings the songs of Radha and Krishna. She had given up all her property to become a devotee. She is known as a great saint in the place. Hundreds of men and women come only to see her. She exchanges a sweet little word here and there, but she sings all the time. The hundreds that come to see her go away as if fully satisfied in heart and soul. If you look at her eyes, you see in them a wonderful look, a great spiritual passion for Him who is the husband of her soul. I do not know

whether she is still alive, but she, through her speechless words, has left an abiding influence of spirituality in my heart.

But she is not the only woman. There are thousands. We do not hear of them. They do not advertise their work and history. But they have kept the torch of spirituality alight all these years. They are keeping it alight now. India's torch is burning—burning in the bush as well as in the homes. The Hindu woman sang and is singing to-day. Sree Krishna is ideal and idol. The Jumna has become the very symbol of her life, and she sings by the side of the Jumna—

"Thy flute is playing, playing, O my Krishna !
The Jumna flows against the tide,
The birds are bursting their throats with song,
The peacocks are dancing with joy.
Thy flute is playing, O my Krishna !
I come ! I come !

I shall not stay, I shall not stay any longer,
I shall put aside my caste
And break the tie of home.
I shall go to my Beloved
Where He calls me with His flute.
The Jumna goes, the birds are going,
The peacocks go,
I shall go, I shall go with them all.
Thy flute is playing, O my Krishna !
I come ! I come !

I shall throw aside my household tasks,
I shall throw aside all that is mine,
I shall go to be near Thee, Beloved,
I shall lose myself at Thy feet.
Thy flute is playing, O my Krishna !
I come ! I come !"

CHAPTER VII

THE KEY-NOTE OF HUMANITY

THE religion of the Hindu has no definition. His God has a thousand names. He does not call Him simply "God." He clothes his God in all the rainbow beauty of his infinite nature. The Persians say that *Jemâl,* the grace of God, is greater than *Jelâl,* the glory of God. So the infinite sweetness and beauty of the Love of God that knows no barriers and no limitations, is what the Hindu loves to dwell upon. His God comes to him in a thousand ways. When He comes as the "One who destroys all trouble," He is "Durga—Mother Durga." When as "He who steals our sins," He is "Hari." When as the "Giver of knowledge," He is "Saraswati." Because He loves His own so much, He has given to them a thousand different ways of finding His love. All the universe is His instrument to call the heart of man into His heart. The Hindu understands this, and his systems, his schools, his cults, are only his thousand different ways of training himself to hear this call. In fact, according to the Hindu's ideal of spirituality, each individual has a school of his own wherein he is trained and trains himself. As Varuna said to his son, "*Go and meditate,*" so that is to the Hindu

the very foundation of his school of spirituality. Meditation is his groundwork. From childhood the Hindu is brought up in that atmosphere, and it becomes his very life and breath. Even in the greatest turmoil, he will retire for a moment to fix his mind and feel the dew of God's presence in the cares of earth. As his religion is not bounded by any creed, it is progressive, and as it is an integral part of his everyday life, he will realize his God in his life through any and every symbol, seen and unseen.

The most important thing which the Hindu has demonstrated is that he is not the servant of the universe, but the universe is his own kith and kin in closest relation. He addresses it as his brother. The stars and moon, the morning sun and the evening sky, the flowers and the trees and the fruits of the garden, the waters of the rivers, the high hills and the dewdrops; each and all manifest to him the expression of his Beloved. The vegetable world and the animal world all are to him full of Life. He tries to see and realize Life—Life—Life everywhere. And he has developed a wonderful school for this realization of Life. There is a great difference between intellectual realization and spiritual realization. It is easy, very easy, to commit to memory all the books of the New Testament, but very hard to realize the teachings in one's life. So the Hindu has discarded from the very beginning any forced book or particular scripture. There are various books in which his ideal has been represented, but the books alone have never captured him.

So whenever you go to a Hindu home you will see that from morning till late at night, there is something going on in his house through which he realizes his ideal in God.

He will rise up early in the morning to have a deep plunge in the river and utter the *mantras* in which he will say, " Let all the waters of the Motherland enter my soul." He will then adore the spirit behind the sun, the " Outer Eye of the Deity." With folded hands full of flowers and water, he prays, " O Thou Parent of the Three Worlds, I meditate upon Thy power divine which directs my intelligence." From his own garden or the garden of his neighbour, where he has free access, he culls flowers and performs his *pujas* in the way in which he has been initiated. He will then, perhaps, go to his business, and will start his business with the name of God. He will offer his prayers there, in his shop, and those prayers are not only weekly but everyday. When he eats he will say prayers before his food. In the evening he may once more have his bath in the river, and spend some time either on the river-bank under the stars or in some secluded place in prayer and meditation. Or he will go to some place where the scriptures are being expounded. There he will not be alone. People of all castes there mingle, men and women, children also.

The Hindu has special days in every week when he will feed Brahmins and other caste people, and by so doing feels that he is feeding humanity. He feeds the lower animals, the birds of the air, with the same ideal, the oneness of all life. He has his

particular days when he will feed his friends, particular days when he will feed those against whom he may feel any enmity, thus trying to transcend all limitations. He has certain days when he observes the stars and learns their lessons. He has certain times of the year when he will go to different places of pilgrimage. The first-fruits of the year and flowers of his garden at the first blossoming he will give to his Deity, then to his neighbours; to those first who are respected for their spirituality, recognizing spiritual superiority not class superiority. When he digs a tank he will dedicate it in the name of God for the benefit of the people. If his father or mother dies, he will spend all his time in meditation, reading his religious books and doing no other work. This particularly for ten or fifteen days or a month, and to a certain extent for about a year. During this time he will never use any bed which is in any way comfortable. He will sleep on a simple blanket spread on the floor. He will not use any cushions. He will make his arms his cushions. He goes through the severest austerity, cooking his own food, eating but once a day. He will not go to any place alone, so that he may be always watched that he keep his *bratas* (vows). Thus and in a thousand other ways the Hindu disciplines himself that he may harmonize his life with the All-life, and understand all Humanity.

It has been said that Hindus quarrel and fight against each other. It is purely an invention. The ideal which the Hindu has conceived and which he has demonstrated in his land is not only

the basic principle for the federation of individuals, but for the federation of nations, Individualism to a Hindu is a reality, a reality in which he realizes that he is man, but he is also more than man. He is the greatest individual who loses himself in the life of others. All life is one. All religions are one. The Hindu does not care to know whether you are a Christian or Mohammedan, Jew or Gentile. If you come in contact with him, he will try to compare notes with you; he will try to understand you and to gather from you the open and secret ways in which you try to realize God. He has not cared very much to know the census report of the world; whether there are five hundred millions of Christians or Buddhists, and whether the number of any people may be falling off or increasing. The chief reason for this is that he has not been able to accept any book as the spiritual source of his religion. He reveres the scripture of every nation as necessary for the evolution of mankind; but his religion is an inner experience. It has no creed. The followers of creed want to proselytize and to convert, and they take the measure of their credal religion as if taking a census. They are anxious to know how many thousands and millions of people there are who belong to *their* creed. That is the drawback of the exclusive religion. The moment you bring division between creed and creed, there no longer remains the spirit of Oneness. In forming a brotherhood of their own fellow-thinkers, they neglect a world of brothers. They think their note is the only note which should be sung and heard. They do not even imagine that there are other

notes in the world. That is why it is so difficult for credal-religionists to understand Hinduism.

Hinduism is not the name of a religion. It is the name of a spiritual culture which the Indo-Aryans evolved, on the heights of the Himalayas and the plains of Bengal, in the hills and valleys of the Deccan and under the starlit skies of Rajputana; which the whole nation throughout the vast continent of India has developed through its various disciplines.

The places of pilgrimage are the books which our men and women read and study. Our family is the cradle where we grow in communism, and from this communism in the family the Hindu race has developed a larger communism. When you help others you help yourself. It is the self of the other that is your own self. So whenever we help others, we must not think that we have done a duty, but that we have helped our own selves.

Even in this materialistic civilization, the Hindu has not forgotten the basis of his love. He has seen his own self in the self of others. He has so idealized that self-identification that there are certain cults, the followers of which when they come to any house and knock at the door, if from within it is asked, "Who are you?" reply, "It is thyself." This is in truth the kernel of Hindu brotherhood. Herein lies the true freedom, the freedom of the soul.

To this freedom religion does not profess to follow one path; it does not profess to follow one creed. Our religion says, "Many are the paths." The human mind is a continuous growth. It

cannot be hedged in by creed or dogma. What is necessary for a child is not necessary for a man. From the beginning this is the great note in the development of the Hindu's ideal. A credal religion may tell you to realize God, but it does not tell you *how*. As each and every human face is different from the other, so the process of development for X is different from that of Y. What is necessary for X is not necessary for Y. Certain things may be common to many individuals, but each individual has a school of his own and in that school alone he must be trained. Such training has been impressed upon our race through the *Ashrama* life where each stage is preparatory to the other, culminating in the ideal of the *Sanyasin*—one with all Humanity.

This is a universal ideal for the human race. Not one faith, but a federation of faiths. Not one ideal, but a federation of ideals. As all paths lead to Rome, so all efforts in the realization of the universal ideal will lead to the goal. As the individual will be saved by the deeper vision, so will the race be also. The deeper vision lies in deeper spiritual culture. The universal ideal cannot be realized unless and until life and vision become one process of the same manifestation. For this ideal each individual must school himself in self-discipline. It is through self-discipline and self-culture that the Hindu race attained its spirituality.

Whenever a Hindu meets a man, the greeting he gives is to a spark of divine manifestation, *Narayan*, or *Namasker*, meaning he bows to the God in him. Whenever he meets a woman, he greets her as Mother, by that realizing the Motherhood of

God, and ascribing all sanctity to womanhood. When he meets any child, he greets him as an expression of the Child-god. In animals and birds, in sun and dew, in trees and flowers and stars and stones, in all things in the universe, he sees the One Spirit.

On the heights of the Himalayas the Hindus have built temples and monasteries instead of hotels and restaurants. Go to any confluence or junction of two or three rivers, there the people congregate to sing the glory of God. Sectarianism in Hinduism! It is blasphemy. How many sects will you see in one group at the religious fairs the Hindus hold in different places? Each man in India has perhaps a peculiar process of self-discipline, or belongs to a certain cult, but he merges his own cult in the universal cult. Go to Puri and Benares or to any of the places of pilgrimage, in one temple there are thousands of people, men and women, of different cults; they all worship the same God. When you stand in the streets of Puri, you will hear people coming from miles away, people of all castes, crying from a distance the moment they see the temple, "Jagannath! Jagannath!"—"Lover of the world! Lover of the world!"

This self-realization as a conscious part of the universe is the goal of the Hindu. India may be the place for his experiment, but the cosmos is his home.

In our religious *melas* or gatherings the representatives of all cults meet. Ages before America conceived of the ideal of the Parliament of Religions the Hindus raised a platform where even the atheists and agnostics had their place if only they

were seeking truth. Each and every system has a corner in the Hindu ideal of spirituality. A Spiritual Congress. Not only the comparing of notes with one another, but the greeting of one another in the atmosphere of realization. Not the invitation of one particular sect to another, the believers of one religion to different believers of the world of religion. It was the invitation of the atmosphere of India. It was the exchange of spiritual wisdom. One came and sang his song, and another and another. Thus millions gathered and gather to-day in different places all over India. They have kept the sacred fire burning that has saved the race.

India holds her torch of spiritual culture to dispel the darkness of the world. It is the fire of spirituality that she lit in the infancy of human civilization. That fire which she received she holds aloft to-day. It is the spiritual fire which the Hindus have sacredly kept that is the only saving message in this world-cataclysm we are passing through to-day. "Hatred ceaseth not by hatred, hatred ceaseth only by love." It is man who through his selfishness and egotism has brought disunion and division. We are reaping this fruit. Let us go back to the ideal. Let our foundation be based on real love; on co-operation, not competition. Not my race or nation alone; not my neighbour, but also the neighbour of a distant home. There is an Eternal Justice. That justice demands of us equal treatment for all. If you feed your neighbour and clothe him, what have you done for the neighbour of others, for he is your neighbour also? Not my interest or the interest of my race, but

the interest of all is the goal. Vast is the Home—wide the Humanity.

India speaks to-day to the nations of the world in the voice of all the Avatars of the ages : " Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. *But one thing is needful.*" India has chosen the " one thing," which " shall not be taken away from her." To-day, as in the ages past, she gathers around the Temple of the Mother. She has come with the incense of love and fellowship. Within the Temple the fire of spirituality is burning. Men, women and children are bringing the sacrifice of their hearts. It is the fragrance of sacrifice that goes forth to all Humanity. The bells of the Temple are ringing. The invitation of the Mother to the children in Her Western Home.

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